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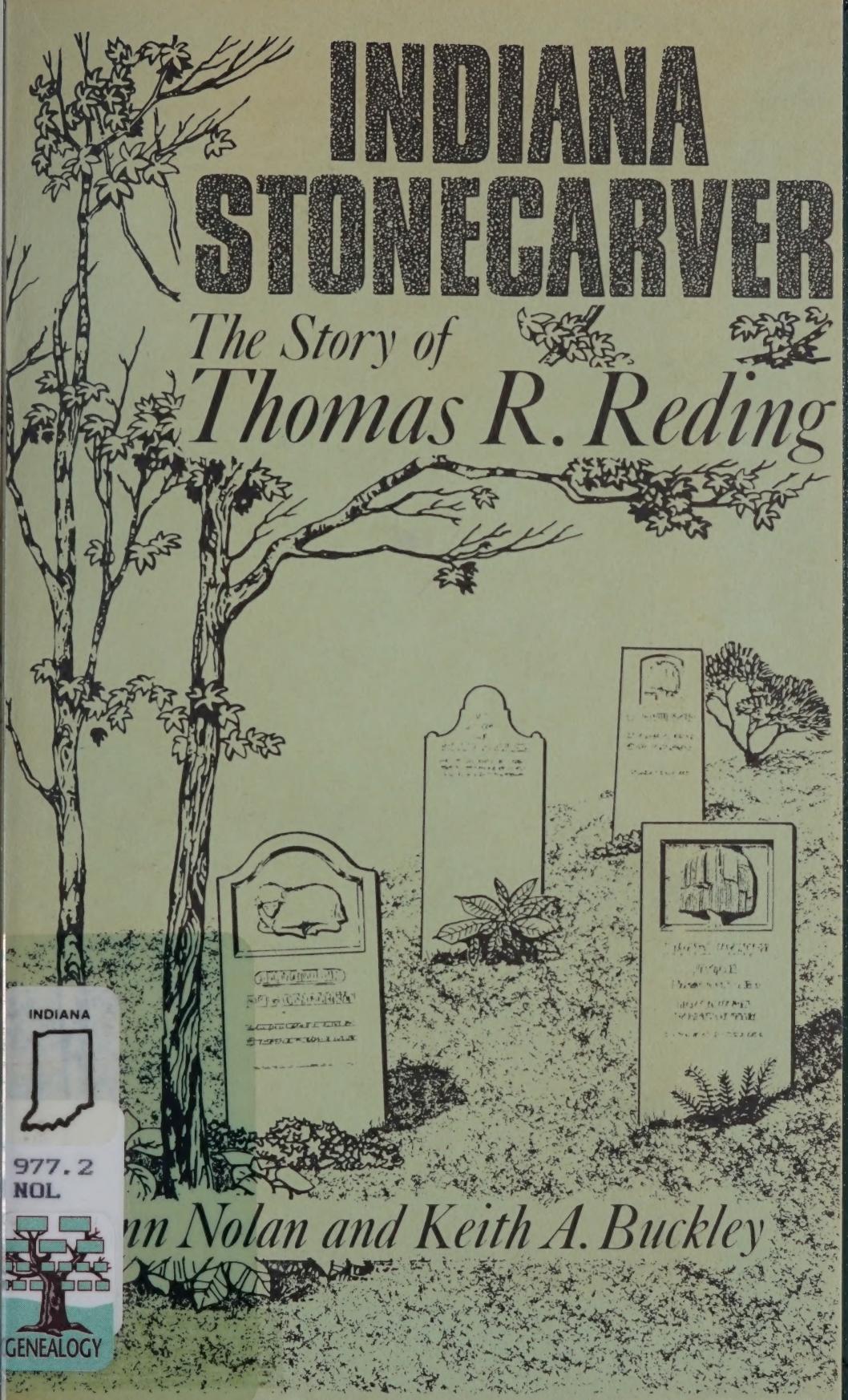
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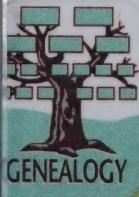
INDIANA STONECARVER

The Story of **Thomas R. Reding**

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in Nolan and Keith A. Buckley

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INDIANA STONECARVER:
THE STORY OF
THOMAS R. REDING

by
Ann Nolan
and
Keith A. Buckley

Indianapolis
Indiana Historical Society
1984

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Indiana Stonecarver

I

THOMAS REDING: BEGINNINGS

The name of Thomas Reding is found on so many stones, as the artist or engraver, that an opinion of his popularity as a business man of the town and a fine stone cutter is quickly formed—a logical conclusion from a study and inscription of those old, old markers, though written history fails to record this name of Reding, his talent or occupation.

Salem Democrat, August 29, 1917

FRANKLIN CEMETERY RESTS ON A SMALL RISE IN A secluded wooded area just off State Road 60, east of Salem, Indiana. The deserted wooden church is elevated on blocks of stone and looks out over the quiet hills of Washington County. A stream winds through the trees and along the road leading to the church. A large, well-tended cemetery lies behind the church, bordered on two sides by trees and in back by a cornfield. The gravestones are arranged in neat rows.

Recent monuments stand in the front of the cemetery, giving way to mid- and late-nineteenth-century stones farther back. Most of these older markers are marble, blackened and marred by the passage of time. Scattered among these worn stones are several carved from a fine-grained, light-colored sandstone. The engraving on these stones appears to be of consistently higher quality than that of the marble ones. Al-

though the sandstone slabs date from 1830 to 1850, they have retained their sharpness and detail. Some bear geometric designs, others intricate pictures. The lettering styles range from the simple to the ornate, and more than one bears the signature of a T. R. Reding.

This same scene is repeated many times throughout the Washington County-southern Jackson County area—century-old frame churches with their companion cemeteries containing fine sandstone markers, sometimes only one or two, sometimes a dozen or more. Other stones rest in lone family plots that stand isolated by roadsides or marooned in corn-fields. The signature of T. R. Reding appears repeatedly. Often an unsigned stone seems safely attributable to Reding because of its marked resemblance to his signed ones.

He employed an astonishing variety of symbolic images and abstract designs. Most of his stones are unillustrated but are nevertheless remarkable for their ornamental lettering styles. One soon recognizes that the carver T. R. Reding was a man of great technical ability and creativity. His stones range from primitive crudeness to ornate sophistication. Beside the repetitive, unimaginative marble stones of his contemporaries, the evocative power of Reding's skillful carving creates an impressive and delightful contrast in these country cemeteries.

Reding included the name of his hometown, Salem, Indiana, on one stone, and a visit to Crown Hill Cemetery there reveals over one hundred and fifty sandstone tombstones. Some were carved by Reding, others are the work of earlier craftsmen. The undistinguished, eroded marble stone of Thomas R. Reding himself stands here too, in the midst of many of his finest creations. Who was this craftsman of such unusual ability, and what kind of tradition produced him?

Reding's achievements can be better understood if related to the history of American gravestone carving. The Puritans originated gravestone art in this country, and their tombstones

reflect their rather grim outlook on life. Puritanism was a religion based on the ideas of predestination and salvation through rigorous self-discipline. Their god was a remote punishing figure who controlled every aspect of life. Despite the rigid iconoclasm of Puritanism, gravestone art provided an outlet for the expression of religious imagery. These stones served a didactic function, presenting religious lessons through simple pictures and symbols.

The stern images on Puritan tombstones reflect not only their strict religious attitudes, but also fears of death unassuaged by their faith. Gravestones abound with mortality symbols, the most common of which is the death's head, a skull decorated with bared teeth and empty eye sockets. Other mortality symbols include hourglasses, coffins, and scythes. Epitaphs proclaim the brevity of life and the inevitability and proximity of death. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Puritan carvers were highly skilled artists, many with unique, recognizable styles.

In the eighteenth century the severity of gravestone imagery began to moderate, with symbols of the joy of resurrection replacing the powerful and relentless mortality symbols. The soul effigy, a winged, disembodied head, was derived from the death's head, but represented everlasting life rather than imminent death. This symbol became as common as the death's head.

By the early nineteenth century the craft of gravestone carving started to deteriorate. Religious attitudes softened, and a wide variety of religious sects spread throughout the country. Religion, while still important, played a smaller role in people's lives. As the need for constant religious teaching waned, carvers began using images for decorative rather than didactic purposes. The often repeated images (willows, funerary urns, and weeping figures by tombs) lost their power and intensity, sometimes suffering from exaggerated sentimentality. Carvers' styles eventually became undistinguished and

undistinguishable. Marble, which decays and erodes with time, replaced the slate and sandstone common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The repetitive images have become even more uninteresting when blurred by one hundred and fifty years of weathering.

Drab, unexceptional stones, lacking vigor and originality, fill most early southern Indiana cemeteries. The ubiquitous designs rarely differ in conception or execution. Thomas Reding, when compared with this mediocrity, stands out as a vital figure in a stagnating craft. He provides a link between the old and the new: his distinctive carvings of common nineteenth-century subjects such as willows appear on the same stones as resurrected seventeenth-century mortality symbols. His work, always intense and powerful, emerges as a melding of centuries of gravestone carving.

Thomas R. Reding was born on or about August 10, 1807, in North Carolina. His brother, James, was born in Randolph County, North Carolina, four years later in 1811, so Thomas may well have been born in that county. We know very little about his parents or early life. According to the Randolph County Court Minutes, a Thomas and a James Reding were bound as apprentices in 1821. James was bound to a tanner on February 5, and Thomas was apprenticed to James Needham, a cabinetmaker, on November 6. Both were to serve until their twenty-first birthdays. We are quite certain these records concern our Thomas and his younger brother. Both of the Reding boys are listed as orphans, and James's age is given as nine years, which corresponds with our Thomas's brother's birthdate. Furthermore, their name, although common in North Carolina, is usually spelled "Redding." The apprenticeship bond goes on to state that Thomas was to be provided with "eighteen months' schooling and when free a suit of clothes."

The next reference to Reding is the record of his marriage to Celia A. B. Attkisson, a native of Kentucky, on July 21,

1829. They were married in Salem, Indiana, by a Rev. Michael Taylor. Reding, then, came to Indiana as a young man, probably very soon after serving out his apprenticeship. James Reding eventually settled in Lawrence County, Indiana, but unless he violated the terms of his apprenticeship indenture, he did not travel with his older brother. Thomas lived in Salem until his death in 1852.

Reding was but one of thousands of pioneers who poured into Indiana during the 1820s. In the early 1800s, tribes of Delaware, Miami, and Potawatomi Indians inhabited the territory of Indiana. The earliest white settlers of Washington County arrived in 1804, and the town of Salem was laid out as county seat in 1814. Both Washington and Jackson counties have existed longer than the state itself. Washington County was created in 1814, Jackson County in 1815, and Indiana became a state in 1816.

During the War of 1812, most of the Indians were driven out of the southern part of the state. With the removal of the Indian threat, pioneers began migrating in great numbers to southern Indiana. They came mostly from Virginia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, usually passing through Kentucky. As early as 1808, a ferry crossed the Ohio River between Mauckport, Indiana, and Brandenburg, Kentucky, providing transportation for many of the southerners. This movement of people increased Indiana's population from 64,000 in 1816 to 344,500 in 1830.

The land that these people found at the end of their travels was heavily forested. Washington County, one county away from the Ohio River, is bordered on the north by the Muscatatuck River. Steep hills rise above the river, and another range of hills called "The Knobs" extends across the eastern part of the county. Gentle rolling hills occupy the rest of the county, tree-covered in Reding's time, fertile farmland today. Jackson County, where much of Reding's early work is located, lies due north of Washington County. It is divided diagonally by the East Fork of the White River, which flows

southeastward through the county. The terrain southeast of the river closely resembles Washington County, but the northwest is covered with precipitous, rocky hills scored by deep ravines. Nearly all of Reding's Jackson County gravestones are confined to the southeastern part of the county.

Salem was a prospering town in the late 1820s when Reding arrived. Many early citizens, like Reding, were natives of North Carolina, and they named the new town after Salem, North Carolina. Some of the North Carolinians were abolitionist Quakers who came north to escape slavery. The early settlers faced harsh challenges even in the growing town of Salem. Farmers waged a constant battle to keep the land clear of trees. The settlers could expect bleak, cold winters and summers of debilitating heat. Streets and sidewalks were non-existent. The lack of any sanitation system resulted in frequent epidemics of smallpox, cholera, and typhoid. Half of all children died before reaching the age of four.

Reding did not start carving gravestones until the late 1830s. There is no way of determining his early occupation. The 1840 census notes that he was employed in manufacture and trade, and the 1850 census lists him specifically as a saddler. At first it seems surprising that Reding abandoned the craft he spent his youth learning. An early rural community, however, would have a greater demand for a saddler than a cabinetmaker. We know from his tombstones that Reding was a talented craftsman; the transition from woodworking to leatherworking probably was not difficult. Stonecarving, saddlery, and carpentry all require the same general skills and often employ similar designs. Reding's brother, James, also owned saddlers' tools at his death; perhaps their father was a saddler, and Reding had early knowledge of this craft. Reding is similar to the New England stonecutters who practiced other trades such as bricklaying and carpentry. Stonecarving was rarely the sole means of support.

Celia Reding gave birth to the couple's first child, Mary, in 1830. Their next two children, James Alexander, born in

January, 1833, and Minerva Irena, born in September, 1834, died in infancy. They were not the only casualties in Salem during the early 1830s. In the summer of 1833, a severe epidemic of Asian cholera invaded the Ohio River valley and struck Salem in late June. Over one hundred people died in a twelve-day period between June 25 and July 7. Panic spread in the wake of the disease. Salem was devastated, and its growth was retarded for many years. Contemporary sources attributed the cholera to stagnant water in a nearby millpond. The dam that contained the pond was subsequently destroyed, and the pond was flushed out to prevent a similar outbreak of disease.

Several gravestone carvers of varying degrees of skill worked in Salem during the 1830s. The earliest carving style we attribute to a man named J. F. Keyes, who worked from the mid-1820s to the early 1830s. His stones, one of which is signed, are characterized by plain lettering in shallow relief. Another carver of the same period employed rather primitive, uneven lettering. Illustrators existed as well; one used stylized geometric designs that resemble stones carved by German settlers in Pennsylvania. All of these early stonemasons worked in sandstone.

Crown Hill Cemetery in Salem is filled with tombstones of the victims of the 1833 cholera plague. Most or all of these sandstone markers, which are very similar, were probably carved by the same man. They are skillfully engraved, with large, simple upright letters, and fortunately, one is signed by an A. Voris. This stone (Fig. 1), for an old couple, is located in Mill Creek Cemetery west of Salem. Voris's was a popular style, however, and it is not always possible to differentiate his work from that of other carvers. The stones of Reding's two children, James Alexander and Minerva Irena, were evidently carved by Voris. Some of the stones we attribute to Voris are illustrated with willows and elaborate leafy and floral designs and are notable for their texture and detail (Fig. 2).

"A. Voris," we find, was Abraham Voris, a native of Penn-



Fig. 1. John and Isabela Sapp stone, Mill Creek Cemetery, Washington County, signed by A. Voris

sylvania, born in 1795. In 1850 he lived in Orange County, Indiana, and listed his occupation in the Seventh Census of the United States as, simply, "tombstones." We theorize that he lived in the Salem area at the time of the cholera epidemic and that he taught Thomas Reding the art of tombstone carv-



Fig. 2. Metilda Amsden stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, attributed to Abraham Voris

ing. This speculation is based on the existence of several stones from the mid-1830s, done in Voris's lettering style but rather crudely executed. These might be the product of a teacher and student working together, or of a student imitating his mentor's style. In any event it is certain that there was a connection between Voris and Reding—four stones from the mid-1840s

are signed by both carvers. Whoever his teacher was, Thomas Reding probably began learning the craft of tombstone carving in the mid-1830s.

In the early 1830s, before he became a prolific tombstone carver, Reding engaged in a rather interesting pastime. The Probate Court Record Books from the period are filled with cases involving him: *Reding vs. Dennis*; *vs. Davis*; *vs. Smith*; *vs. Plott*; *vs. Beck*. Many of the cases involved debts; Reding was sometimes the plaintiff, sometimes the defendant. Similarly, he sometimes lost and sometimes won. One case involved the sum of 93 and $\frac{3}{4}$ ¢, another the considerable sum of \$93.96. At one time Reding was involved in a suit with the Salem Savings Institute (he lost and was ordered to pay the Institute \$60.42). At another time he and a fellow Salem resident, William Rodman, were sued by the inhabitants of an entire township. The case was eventually decided against Reding and Rodman.

In his most complex case, Reding in 1835 sued a man named John Atkinson of Orange County to collect a debt. The case dragged on for years, with much stalling by both parties. In 1837 Reding accused Atkinson of forging a deposition relating to their case, and in a separate suit, Atkinson sued for slander. When the Washington County Circuit Court decided that forging a deposition was not a crime and that therefore Reding's statements were not slanderous, Atkinson appealed to the Indiana Supreme Court. The Supreme Court records show that Reding accused Atkinson of forgery, saying in the presence of various "good & worthy" citizens of Salem: "he can forge depositions," "he obtained that by forgery," and "he forged it." The Supreme Court decided that forging a deposition was indeed a crime and that Reding's statements were slanderous. The Court reversed the lower court decision and gave judgement for Atkinson.

Occasionally, Reding's debts were settled by other people. In 1832 Alexander Atkisson, a wealthy Salem citizen, paid off

a debt of \$15.98. This man was probably Reding's father-in-law. Early Washington County histories state that the Attkissons lived in Kentucky before coming to Indiana; Celia Attkisson Reding's birthplace is listed as Kentucky in the U. S. Census. In addition, the Reding's first son's middle name was Alexander, and they later had a daughter named Jemimah, which was the name of Alexander Attkisson's wife. In 1842 Thomas's brother, James, settled the debt incurred by Reding and William Rodman. This is the last mention of Thomas Reding's name in the court records.

Reding's involvement in litigation leads us to speculate about his personality. We envision a man determined that justice be done, a man quick to anger. It was much easier to take someone to court in Reding's time than it is today. The filing fees were minimal, and people often represented themselves or were represented by non-attorneys. The courts were never as crowded as they are today. Reding was by no means the only businessman in Salem who went to court to settle his debts.

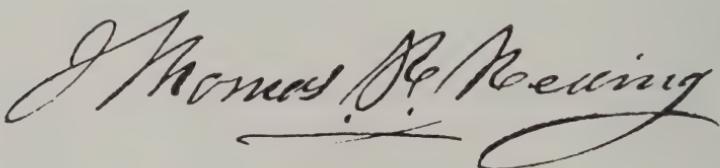
By the late 1830s, Salem was still struggling to recover from the devastating cholera epidemic. Reding's family continued to grow: a third daughter, Jemimah, was born in 1837, and another son, Joseph, was born the next year. Both children survived to reach adulthood. As we have suggested, Reding was probably learning the craft of gravestone carving during this period. He was certainly producing stones on his own by the early 1840s.

Before proceeding to a discussion of his carvings, we must explain how we are able confidently to attribute unsigned stones to Reding. He employed several distinct lettering and illustrative styles during his career, and if he had never signed a stone, we would not know we were dealing with a single carver. Fortunately, Reding signed perhaps one fifth of his works. The discovery of just one signed marker of a given style links Reding to all others of that style. Some stones are

obviously transitional with their use of more than one style. Our task is simplified by the fact that sandstone was not the common medium in the Washington County-Jackson County area during Reding's period. His occasional marble stones greatly resemble his sandstone ones.

We have no way of knowing where Reding quarried his stone. Sandstone is plentiful in Washington County, and large outcroppings of the rock are found on hillsides and in creek beds throughout the area. We also have no information on what tools or methods were used to work the hard stone. The rock may have been removed with special saws, smoothed by rubbing it with water and sand, and then finished with chisels. One final mystery about Thomas Reding is the question of payment. We find no mention anywhere of how much he was paid for his services.

Exact dating of tombstones is often difficult, due to the common practice of post-dating (carving a stone sometime after the death of a subject). Families often could not afford a gravestone at the time of death and temporarily marked the gravesite with a fieldstone or a wooden marker. In addition, stonecutters were not always readily available, and prospective clients would have to wait until one came to the area. Our chronological arrangement of Reding's stones, then, relies on the style of each stone rather than the date of death.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Thomas Reding". The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a prominent 'T' at the beginning and a long, sweeping 'ing' at the end.

Thomas Reding signature as it appears in a county probate record book

II

THE CARVINGS

REDING'S EARLY STONES ARE THE HARDEST TO IDENTIFY. They are often crude and awkwardly executed, which sometimes makes them indistinguishable from the works of other carvers. Only later in his career, when his talents approached full fruition, does Reding rise startlingly above the craftsmen of his period. Recognizing Reding's early gravestones requires some practice and familiarity with his beginner's experimentation in design, facilitated by one very early signed stone. The stones for Lucy Ann Harrell, William Rodman, and Mary Jane Gordon are examples of Reding's earliest works. They are the products of a creative mind limited by technical immaturity.

Harrell Cemetery is a small family plot in southern Jackson County, roughly a mile from the Muscatatuck River. The hills of Washington County are visible across the river. The cemetery stands at the intersection of two country roads, with flat farmland stretching in every direction. Here stands the Lucy Ann Harrell stone (Fig. 3), the earliest signed work by Reding we have found to date.

The crescent design at the top of the stone is a sun symbol; chisel marks or lines suggest rays of light. This common nineteenth-century symbol has a dual meaning. The sun sets on earthly life and rises on a new life in heaven. The coffin and arrow design near the center (representing the pain of death) was widely used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries



Fig. 3. Lucy Ann Harrell stone, Harrell Cemetery, Jackson County, signed by T. R. Reding

but is rare in nineteenth-century Indiana. If Voris was indeed Reding's teacher, he may have observed this design in Pennsylvania during his youth and later taught it to his pupil.

Even on this early stone, Reding begins to experiment with the decorative possibilities of lettering. The tails of the capital letters and the "f" in "of" curve to terminate in deeply

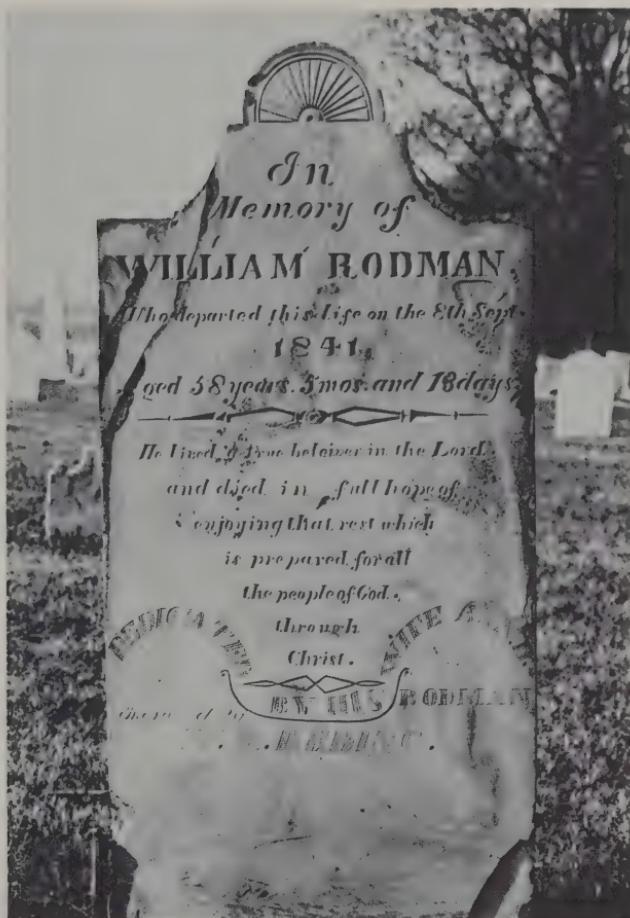


Fig. 4. William Rodman stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, signed by T. R. Reding

incised dots. Some phrases stand upright, others incline to the right or left. The numbers are crudely executed. The flattened "4" is a recurring feature on Reding's early stones. Close examination of the base reveals Reding's signature, although it is not apparent in the photograph.

The William Rodman stone (Fig. 4) in Salem's Crown Hill

Cemetery is similar to the Harrell stone. (William Rodman and Reding were involved in a court action as codefendants; Rodman died before a decision was reached.) The design at the top is a sun fan, a variation on the sun symbol. Reding remained fond of this symbol throughout his life, frequently modifying and changing it. We again find the coffins flanked by stylized arrows. The lettering displays a beginner's irregularities in spacing and relief.

Reding's method of signing this stone is noteworthy. The phrase "Dedicated by his wife Annie Rodman" winds across the bottom of the stone and is counterbalanced by the words "Ingraved by." Reding then centered his signature beneath the dedication. The stone has a pleasing, well-balanced appearance and evokes a feeling of exuberance, not at all typical of a gravestone. The carver was obviously proud of his creation. The mood of cheerfulness and the relative crudity of the lettering lead us to conclude that the Rodman stone is one of Reding's earliest carvings. This is a work of a man confident of his growing abilities and pleased with his end result.

Mary Jane Gordon's grave marker (Fig. 5) is also located in Crown Hill Cemetery. Similarities to the Harrell and Rodman stones enable us to attribute this unsigned work to Reding. The execution of the phrase "In Memory of" is almost identical on all three. The number "7" and the feathery darts are much the same on the Harrell and Gordon stones.

The Mary Ann Charles stone (Fig. 6) stands in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, in southeastern Washington County, near the town of Pekin. This attractive graveyard sits on top of a steep rise, its tombstones sheltered by large evergreen trees. Reding again employs the coffin and dart design and continues experimenting with lettering styles.

The Charles stone bears what is probably Reding's first illustration, one of the most powerful images he ever created. A woman is pictured, kneeling or sitting, with her hands clutched to her breast. A bird swoops down on her, incised



Fig. 5. Mary Jane Gordon stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

lines emanating from its body. The bird is a symbol of the Holy Ghost, radiating the spirit of God which flows from above, surrounding the woman in heavenly light. Although the carving is still primitive, Reding has begun to realize the creative potential evident on his earliest stones and now con-



Fig. 6. Mary Ann Charles stone, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

ceives a more personal and therefore a more meaningful image. The raw emotional quality is in fact heightened by the relative crudeness and the archaic style. This marker displays a vastly different mood than the rather cheerful Rodman stone, yet the same man (with the same total dedication to and belief in his work) is the moving spirit behind both stones.

These four works are typical of Reding's germinal carving

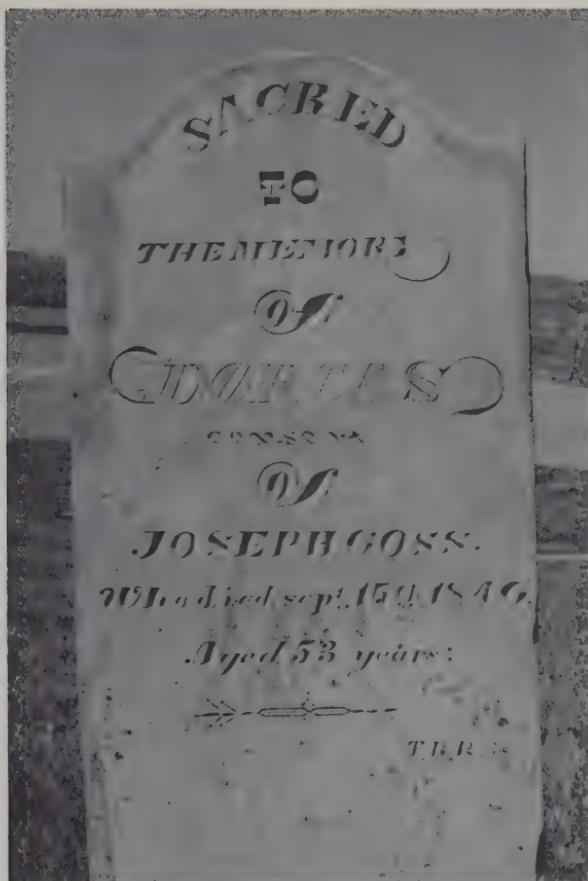


Fig. 7. Dorcas Goss stone, Smallwood Cemetery, Jackson County, signed by T. R. Reding

style. All of his early stones are of this same shape. We feel that around 1845 he developed a new style and abandoned his earliest one.

(Also in 1845 the Redings' sixth child, Carolina, was born. She survived to reach adulthood.)

Smallwood Cemetery in central Jackson County contains the Dorcas Goss stone (Fig. 7). This cemetery, like so many others, is on a hill, looking out for miles on farmlands and

woods. This marker is a fine example of Reding's new style and exhibits his increasing interest in the purely decorative possibilities of lettering. The rendition of the word "of," with the tails of the "f" encircling the "o" is a device often employed by early nineteenth-century carvers. Reding, however, seems to have taken a special delight in experimenting with this motif; it appears on many of his stones. The wings on Dorcas's name serve a symbolic purpose as well as a decorative one, presumably indicating Dorcas's soul rising to heaven. The characters are deeply engraved, in greater relief than his earlier works. This unusual method of signing the stone was never repeated in Reding's career. The stone has retained its fine sharpness of detail through the years.

Smallwood Cemetery is about twenty miles away from Salem, a considerable distance to travel in Reding's time. We have wondered how Reding came to carve stones for some of these Jackson County residents who lived so far away from him. In this case, the explanation may be that, like Reding, the Gosses were originally from North Carolina and briefly settled in Washington County. They were among Jackson County's earliest settlers, arriving in the area in 1812. Perhaps the connection between the Gosses and Reding was due to their common place of origin. Reding later carved tombstones for Dorcas's husband, Joseph, and their daughter, Sarah.

The signed Lucinda Durham stone (Fig. 8) in Browns-town's old cemetery is similar to the Goss stone in both shape and design. The incised lines around the name have a delicate, floral quality and apparently are purely decorative in nature. The "of," outlined here rather than incised, is more skillfully rendered. The capital letters, like those on the Charles stone (Fig. 6), terminate in deep dots. Some of the lettering, however, is still unperfected. We think this stone is post-dated by as many as four years. It closely resembles the Goss stone, which obviously was carved no earlier than 1846.

The Durham family was prominent in early Jackson County, and its members were among the earliest settlers of

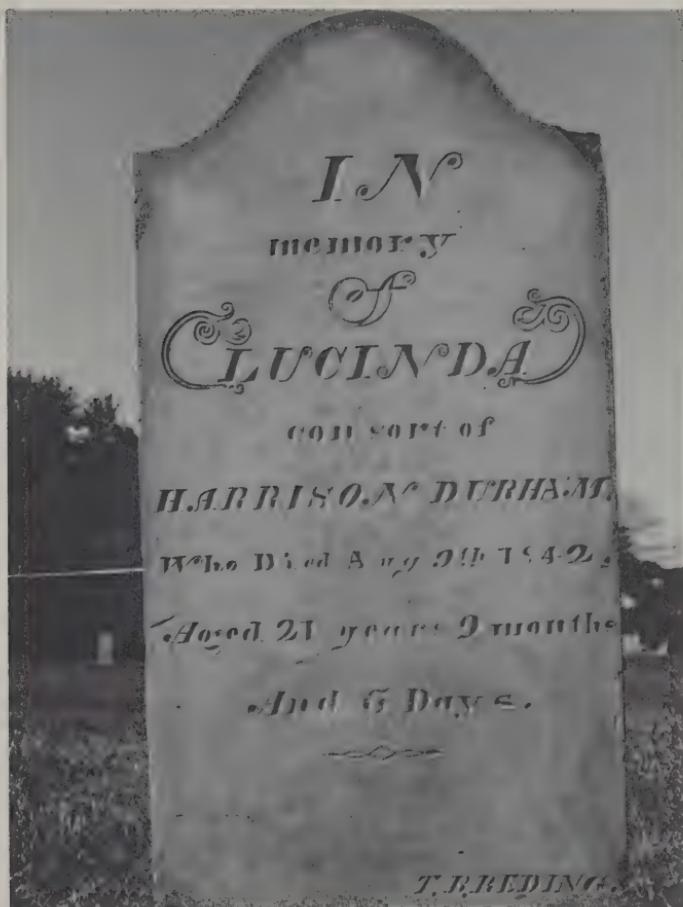


Fig. 8. Lucinda Durham stone, Old Brownstown Cemetery, Jackson County, signed by T. R. Reding

the area around Brownstown and Vallonia. Lucinda's husband, Harrison, was the son of Jesse B. Durham, who settled near Vallonia in 1810. Jesse helped build the fort there around 1812 and later became its commander. Harrison was born in Kentucky in 1813, his mother having left Indiana because of the Indian threat. She returned soon after the birth of her son.

Harrison lived in the Vallonia area his entire life. He was

a blacksmith and a farmer, a Democrat, and, like Reding, a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He married Lucinda, who was from the Owen family of Brownstown, in 1838, and apparently returned her body to her hometown when she died four years later.

Lucinda Durham's life story exemplifies the often tragic plight of pioneer women. She married at the age of seventeen or eighteen and died before reaching the age of twenty-two, having already borne three children. She died two days after giving birth to her fourth child, a daughter also named Lucinda. The infant died nine days later and was buried next to her mother. Harrison remarried soon after Lucinda's death and remarried again when his second wife died. His three wives bore thirteen children. In the Canton Cemetery, we find Reding stones (not pictured here) for a young woman and her three children. The dates show that she died after giving birth to triplets, with one baby preceding her in death, and the others dying two days later.

The unsigned Mary Gilbert gravestone (Fig. 9) rests in Crown Hill Cemetery. The number "6" is carved in much the same manner here as on the two previous stones. Reding's fondness for ornamental curving lines appears here on the letters of the word "IN." The exquisite sun symbol is delicately carved in shallow relief. The entire composition has a simple, pleasing elegance.

The John Mallicoat marker (Fig. 10) stands in Walnut Ridge Cemetery in northern Washington County. An old weather-beaten church, now used as a private home, still guards the cemetery. This building replaced the original log meetinghouse. A Presbyterian congregation worshipped at this location as early as 1833. Walnut Ridge contains probably eighteen Reding stones, including some of his most exceptional works. The Mallicoat stone features what is probably his first carving of a willow. Having confined his early illustrations to the older designs (sun symbols, coffins, and darts),



Fig. 9. Mary L. Gilbert stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

Reding began to experiment with the common nineteenth-century motifs of willows, sheep, and urns during the last part of his career.

The lettering on the Mallicoat stone is rough and uneven, as if Reding was in a hurry to finish his stone. The stone is unsigned. Decorative scallops (perhaps derivative of the sun



Fig. 10. John Mallicoat stone, Walnut Ridge Cemetery, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

symbol) adorn the corners. A rounded frame contains the willow and a tomb. The willow is peculiar, with a trunk so massive that it resembles a cypress. The branches flow gracefully and are minutely carved in small sections.

The willow was the most common nineteenth-century tombstone design, symbolizing earthly sorrow and human sadness, as well as the joy of celestial life. The design was often featured in engravers' pattern books that circulated throughout the country in the early 1800s. The willow lost much of its symbolic meaning through overuse. Many stone-cutters employed the motif because it was popular, concerned only with its decorative possibilities. Today there is no way of knowing what Reding's intentions were when he carved a willow. Many of the other common nineteenth-century designs have this same ambiguous nature.

The tombstone carved for Rev. Robert Lusk (Fig. 11) stands in Covenanter Cemetery near Walnut Ridge Cemetery in northern Washington County. Both cemeteries are less than ten miles from Salem. Covenanter Cemetery occupies a secluded clearing at the end of a mile-long, bumpy dirt road. The Covenanter sect organized at this site in 1823. Its members, originally from South Carolina, were strong abolitionists and active in the Underground Railroad. They held progressive educational views, believing in education for both boys and girls.

Lusk's stone is simple but very fine and bears Reding's signature. We see yet another sun symbol, modified here to include lines on either side that curve out, then spiral back toward the stone's center. The design frames the large, deeply carved word "IN." In many small details—the tail of the "y" in "memory," the careful spacing of the sun's rays—it is apparent that great care was taken on the stone. Yet there is also an error: it is not clear whether Lusk died in 1845 or 1846 (the correct date is 1845). Similar mistakes are made on other stones. Reding, of course, would not have had time to start a stone all over again and had to correct errors as well as he could.

Robert Lusk was born in Ireland in 1780 and received his education at Washington and Jefferson College in Wash-



Fig. 11. Rev. Robert Lusk stone, Covenanter Cemetery, Washington County, signed by T. R. Reding

ington, Pennsylvania. He became a traveling missionary and arrived in Indiana in 1833, where he served as pastor for the Covenanters from 1834 to 1840. According to Warder Stevens's history of Washington County, Indiana, Lusk ac-

quired a reputation as a “staunch friend of education,” and would take over teaching duties when no teacher was available for the schoolchildren of his township. He died at the age of sixty-five.

Almost identical to the Lusk stone is the one marking the grave of Ewing Durham in Jackson County (not pictured here). Ewing was the son of Jesse Durham and the brother of Harrison Durham (see page 23). Born in 1810, Ewing supposedly has the distinction of being the first white male child ever born in Jackson County. He died in February, 1846, two months after Lusk, and Reding probably carved the two stones at virtually the same time. The Durham family must have been satisfied with Reding’s work. He carved stones for several other family members, including Jesse himself and his wife, Elizabeth, both of whom died in the fall of 1850. All the Durham stones are in Vallonia Cemetery.

The Goss, Durham, Gilbert, Mallicoat, and Lusk stones were probably all carved around 1846. They demonstrate Reding’s developing abilities, as well as his sometimes inconsistent execution. He reached a turning point in his career at this time and never again do we see erratic, sloppily carved stones. Every subsequent stone shows total mastery of a skill; literally every stone is a masterpiece. Many years had passed before Reding gained control over his craft, and after he reached this peak, his abilities never waned. He now wielded his tools with accuracy and delicacy, confidently manipulating letters and pictures to suit his purpose. He developed true artistry, no longer struggling to express himself, but now doing so fluently and with ease. The several unique carving styles employed by Reding during the next three or four years are proof of his new proficiency.

The signed Alexander McFerson stone (Fig. 12) is an example of one of these new styles. The stone is very plain, with angular letters and numbers and two simple geometric designs. The relief is uniformly deep, and the spacing of words

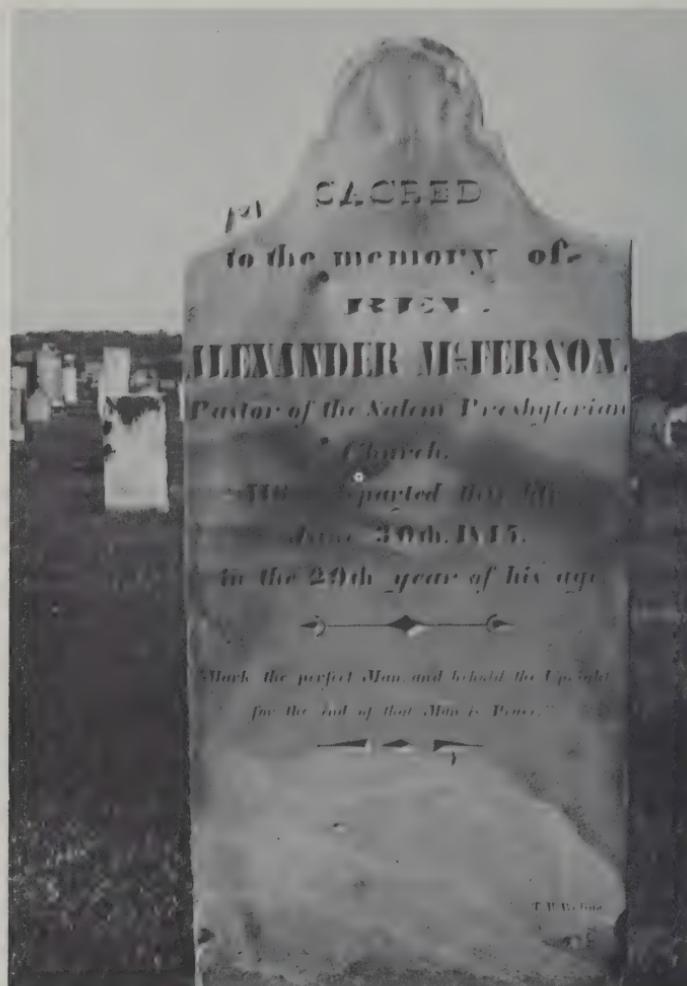


Fig. 12. Rev. Alexander McFerson stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, signed by T. R. Reding

and letters is even and regular. Every detail is beautifully rendered. Unfortunately, the stone's surface has eroded slightly over the years, causing some loss of crispness and detail. Mill Creek Cemetery contains several fine markers of this same style (not pictured here).

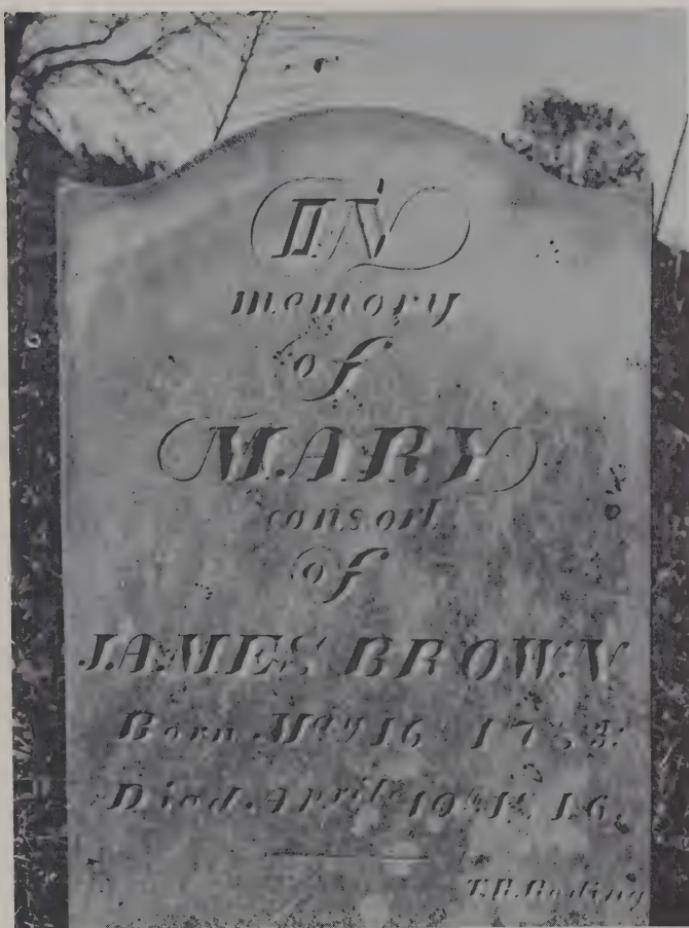


Fig. 13.-Mary Brown stone, Brown Cemetery, Jackson County, signed by T. R. Reding

The signed tombstone for Mary Brown (Fig. 13) stands in Brown Cemetery in Jackson County. The marker for her husband James (not pictured here) rests beside it. Since they are the earliest burials here, we assume the cemetery was named for them. Both stones display another new style of Reding's, characterized by graceful lettering and flowing lines. He has now perfected his method of carving the word "of."



Fig. 14. Isaac Thomas stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, signed by T. R. Reding

Reding used the same graceful style on the Isaac Thomas stone (Fig. 14) in Crown Hill Cemetery. The stone is signed. The lettering is perfect with even spacing and depth of relief. The illustration shows an urn standing upon a raised platform. The urn is a common nineteenth-century design, a sym-

bol of mortality, of an occupied grave. The flame rising from the urn symbolizes the triumphant soul ascending to heaven from the ashes of death. The flowers on either side of the urn are unrealistic and bulky and seem not to have been carved with confidence. The stone bears the first two lines of a common four-line epitaph:

Farewell my dear, dry up your tears
We'll meet again when Christ appears
And when he comes I will arise
And live a life that never dies.

We've also seen the final line:

And view you with immortal eyes.

Isaac Thomas was a religious man, a member of the board of trustees of the Salem Methodist Episcopal Church. At a meeting of the trustees on April 4, 1848, when Thomas's replacement was nominated, another trustee resigned from the board, and Thomas Reding was nominated and approved to serve as trustee. He presumably held the office until his death four years later.

Indiana was overwhelmingly Protestant in Reding's time. Methodism was the most popular sect, with 52,600 members in 1838. The state had 11,300 Baptists in 1833, and 5,000 Presbyterians in 1837. Reding carved gravestones for members of all these sects. All three sects opposed gambling, drinking, and slavery. Churches enforced their tenets strictly, and the old records of Salem churches include long passages describing elders' hearings when members had been charged with drunkenness and interfamily violence.

Many Quakers also inhabited the state, having come to Indiana from the south to escape slavery. Quakers established Blue River Church just north of Salem in 1815. The church

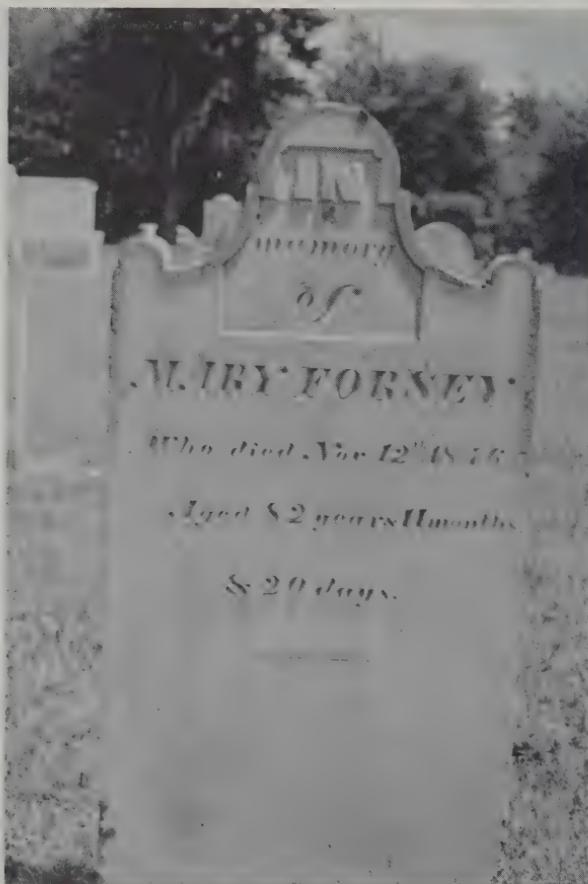


Fig. 15. Mary Forsey stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

split up in 1828, and a new group located 1½ miles north of the old church. Reding's stones appear in both Quaker cemeteries. As might be expected, the Quaker stones are small and plain, with little ornamentation.

The lettering style on the Mary Forsey stone (Fig. 15) in Crown Hill Cemetery relates back to some of Reding's earlier works. The letters of the name end in deeply engraved dots, just as on the Harrell and Gordon markers (Figs. 3 and 5), but



Fig. 16. Elenor Gibbens stone, Franklin Cemetery, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

the carving is more skillful here. The new feature of this style is the ornate rendition of the numbers. The panel at the top is unique, with the word "IN" carved in raised letters and the words "memory of" incised. The stone is unsigned; other markers of this style bear Reding's signatures.

Elenor Gibbens's stone (Fig. 16) stands in Franklin Church Cemetery, where a Presbyterian congregation was

first organized in 1821. The simple lettering contrasts with the again ornate numbers. The willow has a thick, straight trunk and cascading foliage carved in small individual sections. The stone is unsigned.

Two techniques employed here by Reding are particularly innovative. The tree is not centered within the frame, creating an empty space in the lower right hand portion of the picture. In addition, the top of the tree is cut off by the frame. These devices reveal a certain subtlety on Reding's part—a less creative and sophisticated craftsman would center the tree within the frame and include the entire tree in the picture. The use of these techniques by a relatively primitive, rural artist is surprising. The Mathias and Ann Mount stones in Mount Cemetery (not pictured) are very similar to the Gibbens stone.

The signed Susan Carpenter marker (Fig. 17) in Crown Hill Cemetery features the ornate numbering style and a willow and tomb illustration. The tree is tall, with a slender trunk and flowing foliage. Once again the willow is off-center and cut off by the frame, which follows the contours of the stone. A pyramidal tombstone rises to vanish within the leaves of the willow, balancing the composition. The capital letters of the phrase "IN MEMORY OF" are raised. A delicate, scroll-like design appears near the stone's base.

The majority of Reding's tombstones, as we have seen, are carved from sandstone. In the mid- and late 1840s, however, he began working with marble. These stones are rarely remarkable, possibly because of the nature of the stone itself, which deteriorates more quickly than sandstone. An exception is the Anna Atkinson stone (Fig. 18) in Mount Pleasant Cemetery. This monument is one of Reding's most elaborate works.

The gravestone is surrounded by a wrought iron fence, and the main slab rests on a base of four marble blocks of decreasing size. Two pieces of marble top the stone. The carving consists of an illustration, a long epitaph, a statement of dedication, and Reding's signature. The lettering is exe-



Fig. 17. Susan Carpenter stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, signed by T. R. Reding

cuted with precision, and the name is carved in the "raised letter" style. The isolation of this grave from the rest of the cemetery and the care taken in the construction of the stone suggests that this is a very personal memorial to the deceased. The text of the stone poignantly reveals the effect Anna Atkinson's death had on one person:

SACRED
TO THE
memory of
ANNA ATKINSON
Who died May 19th 1848
Aged 19 years 7 mos.
& 16 days

I am fading away to the land of the blest;
Like the last lingering hues of the even;
Reclining my head on my kind angel's breast,
I soar to my own native heaven
My warfare is finished, the battle is won,
To a crown and a throne I aspire.
My coursers are brighter than steeds of the sun
I mount in a chariot of fire.

Adieu.

This stone was erected by T. W. Dyas as a tribute
of respect and token of sincere affection for her
Who sleeps beneath this pile and to whom he was
soon to have been united in the holy estate of matr-
imony.

Accept a tear tis all that I can give
Thy memory ever in my head shall be.

Farewell

T. R. Reding

The unique illustration is equally powerful. Within a square frame an angel with widespread wings and wild flowing hair clutches a smaller female figure under her left arm. The angel's face stands out with startling vividness—deeply set eyes and sunken cheeks create a mournful mood. Both figures wear long, swirling skirts. The angel as a symbol of the heavenly host was a common eighteenth- and nineteenth-century motif, but Reding has, as usual, rendered the commonplace in an altogether singular manner.



Fig. 18. Anna Atkinson stone, Mount Pleasant Cemetery, Washington County, signed by T. R. Reding

Reding again exercises his artistic powers on this stone, with his ingenious use of the frame. A large, vacant space occupies the lower left hand corner, and the figures are wedged against the opposite corner of the frame. The composition heightens the sense of the angel in flight; she appears to rise out of the picture, firmly grasping her charge. The entire illustration is active and agitated.

The Atkinson stone is one of two illustrated stones in Mount Pleasant Cemetery, the other being the Mary Ann Charles stone (Fig. 6) which we have already examined. The two stones, for all their apparent differences, have one significant similarity. On both, Reding has portrayed the deceased on the illustration. Although he does not attempt a true portrait of his subject on either stone, any portrayal of the dead person is rare on nineteenth-century gravestones.

We see a new, plain lettering style on the Thomas Parr stone (Fig. 19) in Crown Hill Cemetery. The letters are large and simple and carefully carved. Thomas Parr was killed in the Battle of Buenavista in the Mexican War. When the Mexican War was declared, Indiana hastily organized a battalion which was sent to the Battle of Buenavista. Parr, a third lieutenant, was one of four men in his company killed during the battle. His body was returned for a hero's funeral to Salem, where the church could not hold all those who attended the services. Another elaborate ceremony was conducted at the gravesite.

The Parr illustration shows a bird, wings spread and head tucked to one side, perched on a leaf-covered mound. Thirteen stars appear in an arch overhead. The picture is hard to interpret because of the ambiguous identity of the bird, which may be either an eagle or a dove. The eagle was a common grave-stone image for members of the military. Reding, however, carved other eagles which are easily recognizable as such. This bird resembles a dove, a common symbol of purity of the soul. The thirteen stars are of course a patriotic symbol. The mound is probably a grave, and the position of the bird suggests a mood of sorrow. The stone has a textured appearance, with fine chisel marks filling the background of the illustration and careful depiction of the individual feathers. The entire composition is balanced and symmetrical.

Several letters to the *Washington Democrat* in 1850 reveal that a good deal of controversy surrounded the Thomas

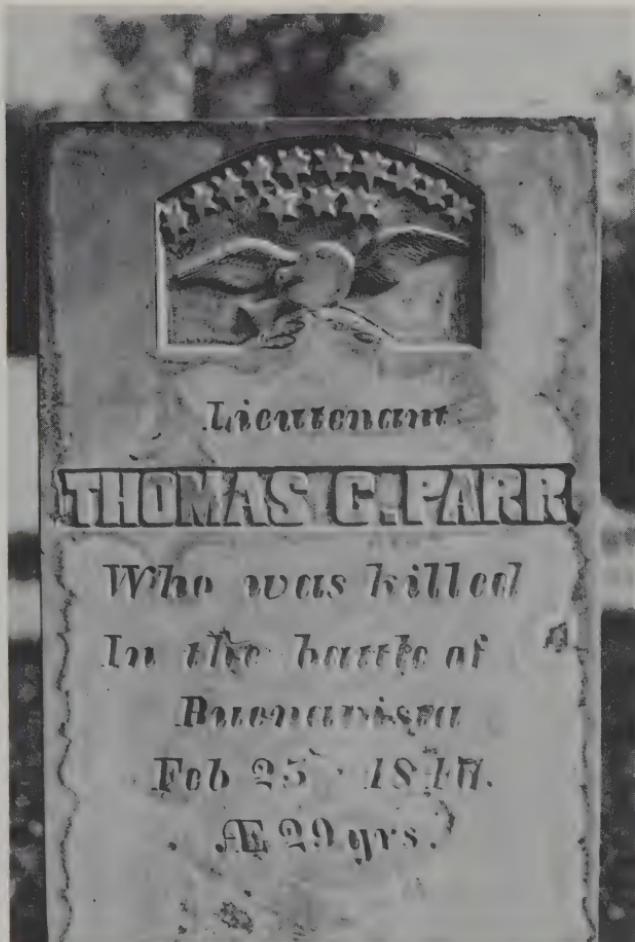


Fig. 19. Thomas C. Parr stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

Parr stone. Thomas's father, Enoch Parr, objected to his son's being singled out as a war hero. Enoch favored the erection of a plain monument in memory of all Washington County soldiers who had died in the Mexican War. Although Enoch petitioned the citizens of Salem more than once, the individual stone for his son stands today, and apparently no group mon-

ument was ever carved. Reding's monument for Thomas Parr, then, must have been commissioned by the town of Salem.

Reding, for all his care, committed a blatant error in his carving, at first mistakenly dating Parr's death, February 23, 1846. He then corrected his error as well as he could. We have seen this same kind of mistake previously, and it may indicate a lack of interest in absolute perfection among Reding's clientele, as well as the impossibility of correcting such an error.

The tombstone carved for Nicholas Young (Fig. 20) in Crown Hill Cemetery is one of four stones we have found bearing the signatures "T. R. Reding & Voris." (Two of the others, unillustrated, are in Mount Pleasant Cemetery. The fourth, featuring an eagle illustration, stands in Driftwood Cemetery in Jackson County.) The depth of relief in the Young stone, 1½ inches on a slab 3 inches thick, is greater than that of any other stone on which Reding worked. An urn is pictured, standing atop a roughhewn but symmetrical chunk of stone. Two massive pillars flank the urn. The urn appears truly three dimensional because of the great depth of relief. Architectural motifs, such as columns and gateways, symbolize the passageway to heaven. The columns on the Young marker support the very weight of the tombstone itself. The illustration fits neatly within the framework, with the curve of the tombstone echoing the shape of the urn's support.

The difficulty with this stone, of course, is deciding what Reding carved and what Voris carved. The knobby texture of the illustration's background is never used by Reding and is often seen on the illustrated stones in Crown Hill Cemetery dating from the early 1830s that we have tentatively attributed to Voris. The same is true of the lightly etched design at the base of the stone. Voris, then, was probably responsible for these features of the Young stone. The urn and the writing, although not readily attributable to Reding, may be his creations. Since no single aspect stands out immediately as Reding's, it is difficult to place the stone chronologically among his other works.



Fig. 20. Nicholas Young stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, signed by T. R. Reding and Voris

Next to the Nicholas Young stone stands the marker for his wife, Mary (not pictured). It is signed by Reding alone and is illustrated with an urn similar to the one on the Isaac Thomas stone (Fig. 14). The Youngs, early settlers of Washington County, arrived in Indiana in 1820. They, like Voris, were originally from Pennsylvania. Perhaps the



Fig. 21. Jonathan Dodds stone, Guthrie Creek Cemetery, Lawrence County, attributed to Thomas Reding

common origin explains why Voris helped carve Nicholas's stone. Or perhaps the Youngs were mutual friends of the two carvers.

The Jonathan Dodds stone (Fig. 21) is one of two stones we have found in Lawrence County. It stands in Guthrie Creek Cemetery, an attractive graveyard surrounded by a

painted wrought iron fence. An old white wooden church with a red roof stands beside the cemetery. The Dodds marker, like those of many children, is quite small. Reding continues to make use of a simple lettering style, as on the Parr stone.

The charming illustration is contained within an oval frame. A lamb sits on the leaf-strewn ground, its legs tucked beneath its body. A tree stump stands close by. The lamb, a common nineteenth-century symbol of innocence, usually appears on the tombstone of a child. The stump, a fallen tree, is a mortality symbol, a symbol of a life cut short. The illustration has a delicate, textured appearance. The background is etched with a horizontal pattern of chisel marks, which also outline the lamb and the stump. The bark patterns have been carefully carved. Reding attempted to reproduce the woolly coat of a lamb in stone, and the portrayal of the lamb is fairly realistic. In addition, the animal's right foreleg is carved in slightly shallower relief than the rest of the body, thereby creating a sense of depth. The stone is not signed.

The N. Chambers stone (Fig. 22) is another of Reding's outstanding creations that stand in Walnut Ridge Cemetery. Chambers reached the remarkable age of one hundred, and his marker bears the simple inscription, "A Revolutionary Soldier." An eagle perches on the mound, probably a grave, poised as though ready to take flight. The bird is more obviously an eagle than the bird on the Parr stone (Fig. 19). Chiselled lines above the eagle follow the contours of the stone and form a sun symbol. Below the bird, the background space increases in depth and is decorated with more fine chisel marks. Individual features are painstakingly depicted, and the wings are shaped to fit within the frame.

The Chambers stone is beautiful in its very simplicity. Absent are the numerous and varied lettering styles of Reding's earlier stones. The plain letters are perfectly carved, but the artist's main interest seems to be the illustration. In this

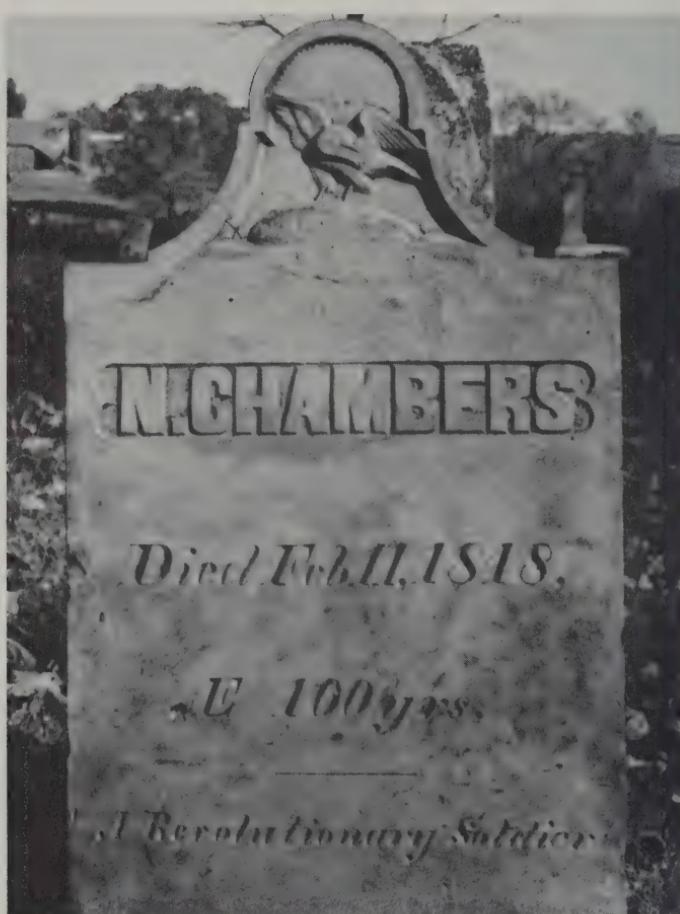


Fig. 22. N. Chambers stone, Walnut Ridge Cemetery, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

respect, the Chambers stone typifies Reding's work during this period of the late 1840s.

Walnut Ridge Cemetery is the site of one of Reding's most massive works, a sandstone sarcophagus (Fig. 23). We have no indication when or for whom this monument was erected. The sides of the tomb are undecorated, except for simple



Fig. 23. Sarcophagus for unknown person, Walnut Ridge Cemetery, Washington County,
signed by T. R. Reding

vertical outlines. The top bears Reding's somewhat worn initials and has scallop designs in the corners, similar to those on the Mallicoat stone (Fig. 10). The obelisk on top of the stone is part of another monument. An obelisk on the ground nearby, however, may once have stood atop the sarcophagus. Crown Hill Cemetery in Salem contains several sarcophagi, some possibly carved by Reding.

Occasionally a single tombstone was carved for more than one person. The Sarah Charles-J. M. Brown marker (Fig. 24) is one of these, carved for a mother and a son who died less than a month apart. The lettering, as usual at this stage of Reding's career, is flawless. Two carved hands, exquisitely detailed, are used as pointers to indicate that Sarah Charles's grave lies on the left, with her son buried on the right. The hands are accurate down to the fingernails. The stone is unsigned.

At about this same time, Reding carved tombstones for two members of his own family, the infant children of his brother and sister-in-law, James and Nancy Reding. James I. Reding died on April 12, 1848, at the age of twenty-four days, and Thomas A. Reding on October 7, 1849, at four months of age. Their gravestones, small and plain but beautifully carved, stand in Liberty Cemetery, just over the Lawrence County border in Orange County. The first son must have been named after his father; maybe Thomas A. was named after his uncle. Perhaps James's and Thomas's father was also named Thomas.

On the H. S. Aston stone (Fig. 25) in Crown Hill Cemetery Reding once again employed his ornate lettering style. The surface has decayed over the years, probably because of a weakness in the original sandstone. A round frame encloses one of the few illustrations of flowers ever carved by Reding. The flowers are difficult to identify. The foliage and unopened buds suggest roses, which were a common gravestone symbol of the brevity of life. The rather bulbous open flowers, however, resemble peonies. The individual veins of the leaves



Fig. 24. Sarah Charles—J. M. Brown stone,
Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County,
attributed to Thomas Reding

are depicted, and the background is filled with fine chisel marks. A common epitaph of Biblical origin adorns the stone:

Blessed are the dead which die
in the Lord they rest from
their labours and their works
do follow them.



Fig. 25. H. S. Aston stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

Abraham Voris was not the only carver with whom Reding collaborated. He also worked with a man named Briggs, and this partnership produced several of Reding's finest stones, unusual in their sophistication and intricacy. The sandstone markers for Mary Ann Spurgin, Samuel Lee, and

Elizabeth Slaed are all products of this collaboration. Reding and Briggs also worked together on numerous marble tombstones, none of them as fine as these three sandstone markers.

Briggs is definitely a more confusing figure than Voris. We have not yet found a tombstone signed by him alone, although we have discovered his signature alongside that of a carver named Snepp. Neither the 1840 nor the 1850 Indiana census reports anyone named Briggs living in the Washington County area, but this, of course, proves nothing—even today the census is not always accurate. Briggs is therefore an anonymous figure about whom we have been able to discover absolutely nothing.

The Reding-Briggs stones represent a challenging task: to discover who was responsible for which parts of each stone. We attribute the illustrations to Reding because they so closely resemble some of his previous stones. The lettering on the collaborations differs from Reding's individually produced stones but resembles unsigned marble stones we have found in the Washington County-Jackson County area from the same period. The lettering also looks very much like that on the markers signed "Briggs and Snepp." Based on these meager facts, we attribute the lettering to Briggs, readily acknowledging that we may be mistaken.

The Mary Ann Spurgin stone (Fig. 26), one of Reding's largest, stands in Old Hebron Cemetery, southeast of Salem. The illustration, its frame gracefully following the contours of the stone, is dominated by a willow. Two tombs and a lamb rest beneath the tree. Fallen leaves litter the ground. The elaborate tree, its foliage represented in separate branches and leaves, partially conceals the large tomb. The willow is more stylized than Reding's previous trees, with its branches ending in zigzag patterns. The trunk and roots are carefully detailed. The lamb is similar to the lamb on the Dodds stone (Fig. 21), with its woolly texture and folded legs. A linear pattern of chisel marks fills the empty background. The Spur-



Fig. 26. Mary Ann Spurgin stone, Old Hebron Cemetery, Washington County, signed by Reding and Briggs

gin stone reflects the carvers' fascination with pattern, texture, and design. The marker includes another of Reding's common epitaphs:

A loving wife a mother dear
a faithful friend is buried here.



Fig. 27. Samuel Lee stone, Mill Creek Cemetery, Washington County, signed by Reding and Briggs

Another Reding and Briggs collaboration, the tombstone of Samuel Lee (Fig. 27), stands in Mill Creek Cemetery just west of Salem. This cemetery, the site of a Baptist church established in 1822, rests in a hollow, its stones spilling down the sides of the hill. Once again we find a willow, its branches terminating in stylized patterns. Three tombs stand beneath the tree. This stone bears no epitaph.

The Lee stone marks the zenith of Reding's artistic experimentation. The foliage is centered within the frame. The tree trunk, placed off to the right, is balanced by the small tombstone in the middle. In what is by far his most innovative development, Reding creates a fuller illusion of depth by carving the background branches in shallower relief than the rest of the composition. These branches seem farther away from and less clear to the viewer, much as they would in nature. Reding first used this illusionistic technique on the Dodds stone, but its impact is much greater here.

For the first time in his career, Reding experiments with perspective, depicting different objects as if observed from different angles. While the rest of the picture is viewed from straight ahead, the sarcophagus is carved as though seen from above, its lid sloping down toward the foreground and the corner protruding outward. In addition, the left half of the large monument on the other side recedes into the stone. All these techniques draw the eye into the picture, actively involving the viewer in the scene.

The Elizabeth Slaed marker (Fig. 28) is another superb Reding and Briggs work, located in Franklin Cemetery. The stone is breathtaking in its gentle beauty, simplicity, and skillful carving. The illustration features two doves perched on a tree stump, one bird carrying a leaf in its beak. The plumage is painstakingly and naturalistically carved, each feather of the tail and body portrayed in careful detail. The birds' near wings spring from the face of the stone as though alive; the far wings recede, merging into the stone. A moving, peaceful mood prevails.

Reding made every attempt to render the tree trunk realistically. The bark is scored with ridges and hollows, textured much like a real tree. The ground is rough and uneven, with a few leaves scattered upon it. A curved panel of acanthus-like leaves, bordered with a simple geometric design, decorates the top of the stone. The central acanthus leaf, a bit larger than the others and facing the opposite direction, sits within its own



Fig. 28. Elizabeth Slaed stone, Franklin Cemetery, Washington County, signed by Reding and Briggs

frame. Plain, slightly raised columns frame the writing, which is ornate almost to the point of illegibility. The entire stone has a multilayered appearance and a refined elegance rarely seen in mid-nineteenth-century southern Indiana cemeteries. The stone's subtle sophistication emerges in sharp contrast from its rural surroundings.



Fig. 29. Elizabeth M. Boyce stone, Beech Grove Cemetery, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding, or Reding and Briggs

The Elizabeth Boyce gravestone (Fig. 29), although unsigned, strongly resembles the three stones just discussed, and may well have been carved by both Reding and Briggs. It stands in Beech Grove Cemetery in east central Washington

County, about a mile from the Scott County line. The graveyard sits across the road from a beautiful old wooden church with a small bell tower. The stone's illustration consists of a willow and a low, broad sarcophagus. The willow, with the now-familiar textured bark, has a very stylized, almost abstract quality. Its trunk rises on the right, and the linear foliage falls towards the center of the picture, terminating in straight lines. The lettering style is very ornate.

A sudden change in Reding's carving style occurred at about this time. The ornate richness of design that appeared in a final blaze on the Spurgin, Lee, Slaed, and Boyce markers then vanished forever from his work. He maintained his interest in textures and designs but returned to the use of plain lettering and simple pictures. He turned away from the sophisticated techniques he had perfected to a quieter, more serene style.

The signed Elizabeth Potter stone (Fig. 30) in Livonia Cemetery reveals Reding's transformation of style. The shape is one he had not used before; the conception of the willow is also totally new. The tree is now symmetrical and completely balanced, occupying almost all of the space within the frame. Reding delicately indicated individual leaves and branches with his chisel, some bits of foliage twisting and curving. The outline of the tree closely follows the shape of the frame and also conforms to the outline of the tomb and the familiar lamb resting beneath it. The entire illustration has a rounded, curvilinear appearance and a pleasing simplicity.

The design above the willow illustration can be interpreted in two ways. It could be a variation on the sun symbol, with the face of the dead woman occupying the center. On the other hand, this could be a representation of Elizabeth Potter gazing from heaven on the scene below, her face surrounded in the light of God. A similar face adorns a marble stone in Walnut Ridge Cemetery (not pictured). Like the Mary Ann Charles and Anna Atkinson stones (Figs. 6 and 18) before



Fig. 30. Elizabeth Potter stone, Livonia Cemetery, Washington County, signed by T. R. Reding

them, these stones are remarkable for their depiction of the dead person. The flawlessly executed lettering provides some continuity between Reding's earlier and later styles, closely resembling the Parr and Chambers stones (Figs. 19 and 22).

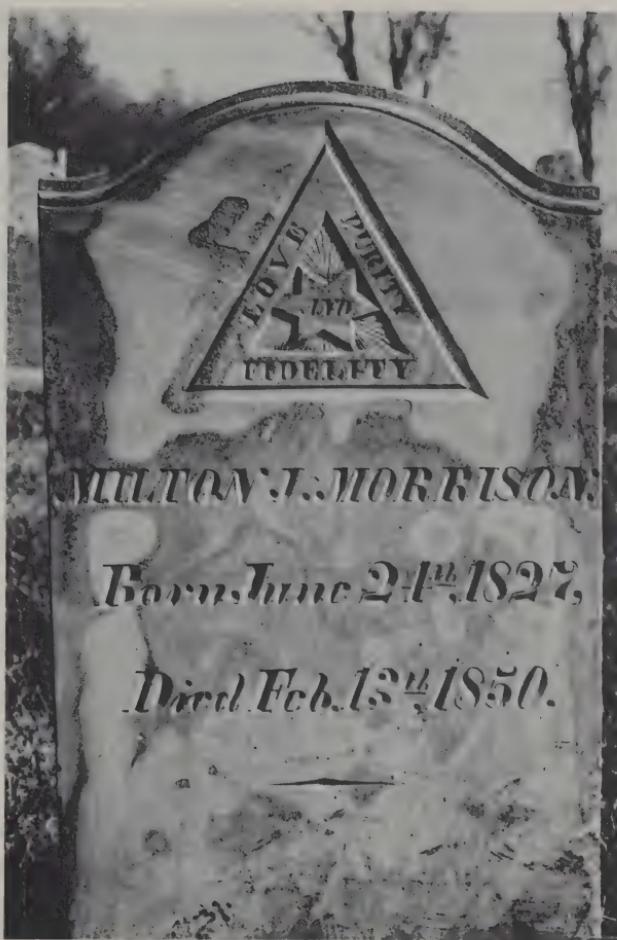


Fig. 31. Milton J. Morrison stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

Reding employs an identical lettering style for the Milton Morrison stone (Fig. 31) in Crown Hill Cemetery. A triangular decoration adorns the stone, and the sides of the design are inscribed with the words "love, purity and fidelity." A similar symbol would soon adorn Reding's own tombstone.

The idea of death and the end of his carving, however, must have been far from Reding's mind in 1850. The last years of his life were among the most active and prolific of his career. The Seventh Census of the United States in 1850 provides us with important facts about the Reding household. It included for the first time such information as the names and ages of all household members, as well as the state of birth, specific occupation, and financial worth of any working persons. The Washington County census lists Thomas, forty-four, his wife, mistakenly recorded as Lela, thirty-eight, and their five living children (Harriet was born in 1850). Reding's worth was \$1,000. In addition to the family, three other people lived in the Reding household. George W. Shephard, twenty-nine, and George W. Steele, twenty-one, both from Indiana, were saddlers by profession. The third, a nineteen-year-old Irish immigrant named James Haney, was listed as a stonemason.

The presence of these three men at the Reding residence leads us to a few conjectures. While Reding still called himself a saddler, he must have been spending a significant amount of time on stonecarving. Shephard and Steele were probably past the age of apprenticeship, and they may have been hired to help with the saddlery work, while Thomas devoted more and more time to the craft for which he obviously cared so deeply. James Haney, who had only arrived in the United States in February, 1850, may have assisted Reding in the preparation of stones for carving. By the time of Reding's death, Haney may even have done some simple lettering. The discovery of a huge number of marble stones from the 1850s and 1860s in the Washington County area signed by Haney makes this theory more plausible. We even find a few sandstone markers for years immediately following Reding's death that bear a striking resemblance to Reding's final style. Haney must have learned much about his craft from Reding, but as time gradually separated the young man from his teacher, his works

approached the standard of nineteenth-century mediocrity. He never matched Reding's originality or creativity, although he worked with Reding long enough to develop some technical proficiency.

In the spring of 1850, a death occurred which must have touched Reding very deeply. On May 19, his younger brother James died. Not yet thirty-nine, James's relatively brief life was full of the sadness and harshness of the early nineteenth century. On September 16, 1845, he had married Nancy Ballard of Lawrence County. As we have seen, James was a poor man, and his two children died in infancy. After James's death, Nancy returned to her mother's home and died without remarrying at the age of sixty-four in 1886.

The tombstone that Thomas carved for his brother (Fig. 32) is a stained, eroded piece of marble, its simple willow barely visible. Fortunately, we can make out the inscription, which reads:

JAMES B. REDING
Was born in Randolph
Co. N.C. Oct, 10, 1811
Died May 19, 1850

Dedicated by his
brother Thomas.

This stone raises interesting questions about Thomas's relationship with his brother. The relative plainness of the stone and the inferior marble at first seem to deny a strong attachment. We must consider, however, that Reding's style had become much simpler, and that none of his last stones match his former ornate magnificence. This failure to construct a lavish monument to his brother need not reveal an absence of love—he simply no longer carved this kind of stone. The use of marble probably reflects a special effort to pay homage to



Fig. 32. James B. Reding stone, Liberty Cemetery, Orange County, dedicated by and attributed to Thomas Reding

his brother. Reding's sandstone markers are often in pristine condition today, while the marble stones are worn away and illegible. The sandstone, therefore, seems more beautiful, and we tend to ignore the unremarkable marble slabs. Marble didn't arrive in the area until Reding's late career; it must have been expensive and hard to acquire, in contrast to the plentiful

native sandstone. Since Reding himself had to buy the marble, he obviously saved it for special monuments commissioned by patrons who were willing to pay a higher price. In using what was for him the most valuable stone, Reding showed his love for his brother.

The dedication of the stone strengthens our belief that James and Thomas were very close. Other monuments from the period, including Reding stones (the Rodman stone, for example), are dedicated by the spouse of the deceased, no matter who carved them. Thomas, then, wanted this marker to stand as *his* memorial to his brother.

The meager written references to James Reding provide further support to our theory concerning the brothers' relationship. James's estate file includes an itemized list of his few possessions—a plow, a few bedsteads, a set of saddlers' tools—worth less than \$150 altogether. He neither owed nor was owed any money. Although he apparently farmed, he owned no land himself. All the money received from the sale of James's estate went directly to his wife. There is no evidence to suggest James had ever enjoyed a more prosperous financial situation, yet we know from the Washington County Probate Court Records that he helped pay off one of Thomas's debts. Even though he was poor, James found the means to help his brother.

After James's death, Reding continued to produce fine stones. The James Scarborough stone (Fig. 33) in Walnut Ridge Cemetery features one of Reding's finest carvings of a lamb. The animal is quite similar to the Dodds lamb (Fig. 21), with its woolly texture and its head turned to face the viewer. The legs are beautifully detailed, and the outline of the haunch is carefully executed. The lamb is suspended within a pointed oval frame, a new shape for Reding, and one that we never see again. The lettering belongs to the now familiar style of the Potter and Morrison stones (Figs. 30 and 31). The stone is unsigned.

The signed monument for Robert Meeks (Fig. 34) stands



Fig. 33. James W. Scarborough stone, Walnut Ridge Cemetery, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

in Mount Zion Cemetery, just west of Salem on State Road 60. The cemetery sits on a hilltop at the end of a short gravel road. Cows graze in the pasture between the cemetery and the old church. The Meeks stone wears a capstone held in place by two lead pegs that fit into holes in the main slab.

Two willows, similar to the Potter willows (Fig. 30), deco-



Fig. 34. Robert A. Meeks stone, Mount Zion Cemetery, Washington County, signed by T. R. Reding

rate the stone. The trees, although shorter and broader, are just as symmetrical and balanced. Between them is a single tombstone, carefully centered within the frame. From the ground beneath one of the trees rise two hearts, slightly distorted and leaning to one side as if wafted by the wind. The

heart is a symbol of the soul and here suggests the same meaning as a flame rising from an urn. The heart probably represents the soul of Robert Meeks; the second heart may symbolize a relative whose death closely preceded or followed his. We find the heart motif again on a marble stone in Walnut Ridge Cemetery. The heart was popular during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but is rarely found on a stone from Reding's period. In addition to the Meeks stone, Mount Zion also contains several fine unillustrated stones from Reding's late career.

The Martha Ann and Thomas Wilshire stone (Fig. 35) in Crown Hill Cemetery is, quite simply, the most astonishing and exciting stone Reding ever carved. Besides being flawlessly rendered, the Wilshire stone creates a fascinating link between Reding and the great Puritan stonecarvers of New England.

Inside a frame identical to the one on the Meeks stone are two willows, typical of Reding's later trees. Under the tree on the left is a tomb. A lamb rests under the other tree and, in the corner of the illustration, a soul effigy rises from the ground. This motif, common in eighteenth-century New England, is an amazing design to appear on a mid-nineteenth-century stone in Indiana. We can only guess where Reding was first exposed to this image; the soul effigy appears nowhere else in the Washington County-Jackson County area. He may have learned of this and older gravestone motifs from Abraham Voris. The older Voris probably had ample opportunity to observe the soul effigy on stones in his native state of Pennsylvania.

The primitive face of the soul effigy resembles the face on the Elizabeth Potter stone (Fig. 30). Small wings spring from the shoulders which have just emerged from the ground. The fine lines incised on the wings are reminiscent of the wings of the various birds carved by Reding. The soul effigy is a symbol of the ascension of the soul to heaven, and here Reding



Fig. 35. Martha Ann and Thomas Wilshire stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, illustration attributed to Thomas Reding, lettering attributed to James Haney

used it in much the same way that he used the hearts on the Meeks stone. The illustrations were no doubt carved at nearly the same time; the composition of these monuments is very similar.

The rest of the Wilshire stone is also beautifully carved. The two willows, their foliage carved in swirling detail, follow

the contours of the frame and the lamb. The familiar, quaint lamb sits near the center of the illustration among several large scattered leaves. The depicted tomb has a finely carved border on its base. The ground under the lamb is represented by tiny bumps, and the entire background surface is carefully decorated with chisel lines. Every element of the illustration epitomizes Reding's late style and his complete mastery of each effect in his repertoire.

Because the stone is undoubtedly the work of Reding, we are at first confused by the death date of the main subject. Martha Ann Wilshire died on May 2, 1853, seven months *after* Reding's death. The illustration is Reding's down to the chisel marks, but how could he carve a stone for someone who died after he did. The answer is perfectly clear: Reding, like many New England carvers before him, and like commercial carvers today, prepared stones in advance, to have them ready for prospective customers. We propose that the illustration of the Wilshire stone adorned one of several unlettered slabs that remained after Reding's death. Whoever finally acquired the stone destined to be used for Martha Ann Wilshire and her son apparently took the stone to Reding's successor, James Haney. The lettering so closely resembles Reding's and the lettering that Haney used on his early solo efforts that this must surely be the case. The illustration was far beyond Haney's creative potential. Thomas Reding was the only man in the area capable of carving such a magnificent work.

We tentatively attribute the huge limestone monument for Rev. W. W. Martin (Fig. 36) in Livonia Cemetery to Reding. The rough-textured limestone doesn't withstand weathering as well as sandstone, and the lettering on this monument is blurred. It strongly resembles other Reding stones of this period, and the large, raised block letters were rarely used by other carvers. The stone could, however, have been carved by Haney while he was still imitating Reding. The bottom stone is badly damaged and has been cemented onto the base. A



Fig. 36. Rev. W. W. Martin stone, Livonia Cemetery, Washington County, attributed to Thomas Reding

signature, if it appeared, probably would have been carved on this destroyed section.

The monument stands over twelve feet tall and consists of seven different pieces of limestone. The tall obelisk-shaped

section is decorated with a torch and surmounted by an urn from which a flame rises. The top of the urn is remarkably similar in shape to the urn on the Nicholas Young stone (Fig. 20). The flames on the two urns remind one of the tails on Reding's lambs.

This massive tombstone no doubt cost a good deal of money. We considered the possibility that Reverend Martin's congregation commissioned the stone. An examination of the extensive records of the Livonia Presbyterian Church fails either to prove or disprove this theory. The records do reflect the great popularity of Martin among his flock and include a sincere tribute to the old minister.

The simple style used by Reding in his later years is heightened on his last few stones. The Joseph Goss stone (Fig. 37) in Smallwood Cemetery is a plain yet perfect stone, with large, broad deeply incised letters that stand out clearly and sharply. This simplicity is broken only by the lovely tails that flow off the "ds" on the word "Died." Even the design beneath the writing is somehow quiet and somber. The lettering style resembles that of the Reverend Martin stone. Joseph Goss's gravestone stands next to the marker for his wife, Dorcas, which was carved years before by Reding. The broken, undated stone for their daughter, Sarah, lies on the ground nearby.

The Christena Daniel stone (Fig. 38) has the latest date of any signed stone that we have found and is located, like so many of Reding's finest stones, in Walnut Ridge Cemetery. Probably one of the last illustrated markers that he completed, this one differs greatly from any previous works. A square frame contains a willow, starkly alone. The tree bears not the slightest resemblance to the willows of the Meeks and Wilshire stones (Figs. 34 and 35). Individual branches are carved with detailed foliage flowing both behind and in front of other branches. Reding returns to the three dimensional rendering of a tree, with some of the branches in much higher relief than others. Our first impression of the Daniel stone is surprise at

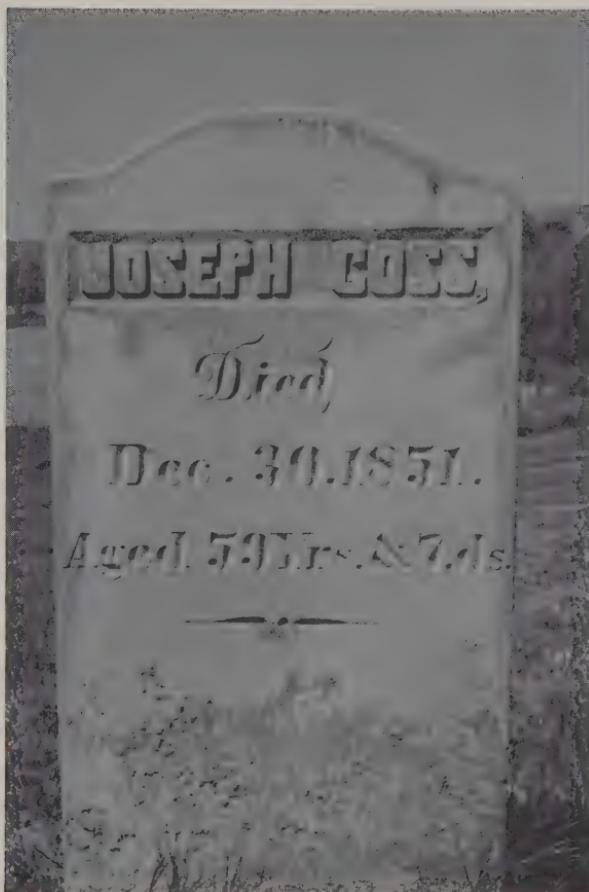


Fig. 37. Joseph Goss stone, Smallwood Cemetery, Jackson County, attributed to Thomas Reding

what seems to be crude carving, but this apparent crudeness is due to the isolation of the tree and the absence of any of the other delicate features to which we have grown accustomed. The very isolation of the willow within the plain frame calls attention to the beautiful tree which Reding so meticulously carved. The image is deceptively simple and, finally, extraordinarily powerful.

The Mary Ann Deny stone (not pictured), also in Walnut



Fig. 38. Christena Daniel stone, Walnut Ridge Cemetery, Washington County, signed by T. R. Reding

Ridge Cemetery, features another of these incredible willows and dates from October, 1851. The willow on James Reding's marble stone (Fig. 32) is also of this style, only a bit cruder.

The story of Thomas Reding's tombstone-carving career ends here, for he died on October 21, 1852. He was forty-five, still a relatively young man, yet older than so many of the subjects of his stones. The cause of his death is unknown. He

must have died suddenly, for the illustrated Polly Thomas stone in Little York Cemetery (not pictured) is dated July 11, 1852, just three months before Reding's death. Reding was survived by his wife Celia and his five children who ranged in age from two to twenty-two.

III

EPILOGUE

REDING'S FINANCIAL AFFAIRS WERE IN A STATE OF TURMOIL at the time of his death. On November 29, John L. Menaugh and Alexander Attkisson (probably Reding's father-in-law) signed papers swearing to "faithfully discharge the duties" as administrators of Thomas's estate. They swore that his property was worth less than \$500, and in their bond they promised to pay the sum of \$1,000 if they did not perform their duties. Menaugh was to serve as administrator, and Attkisson put up the money.

On December 3, 1852, an administrator's notice and administrator's sale notice appeared in the *Washington Democrat*. The administrator's notice reads as follows:

Notice is hereby given that I have this day taken out letters of administration on the estate of Thomas R. Reding, late of Washington County, Indiana, deceased. All persons indebted to said estate will make immediate payment, and those having claims against the same will present them duly authenticated for settlement. The estate is supposed to be insolvent,

John L. Menaugh, admin'r

The notice of the administrator's sale reads:

Notice is hereby given that I will offer for sale to the highest bidder on the 25th day of December at the late residence of Thomas R. Reding in the town of Salem, Washington County, Indiana, all the personal property belonging to said estate consisting of Two Horses,

One two-horse Carriage, a Lot of Saddles, Tomb Stones, Saddlery, and Saddlers Tools, Household and Kitchen Furniture, and other articles too numerous to mention.

The notice goes on to describe the method of payment, and it too is signed by John L. Menaugh.

We see, then, that Reding died in debt and that his personal property had to be sold to discharge these debts. He owned no land and had apparently rented his house during all the years of his residence in Salem. His personal possessions seem to have been numerous, and he must have been in good financial condition as long as he was alive.

Eleven people made claims on Reding's estate, ranging from \$2.50 to \$137.20, and totaling the sizeable amount of \$466.64. One of the claims for a smaller sum was made by an anonymous physician for services in Reding's last illness. Alexander Attkisson claimed the largest debt of \$137.20. If he was indeed Reding's father-in-law, Celia Reding's lot could hardly have been made any easier by her father's large claim on her husband's estate. Only one person owed Reding money, that a debt of \$15.

Reding's possessions were eventually sold (probably including the unlettered Wilshire stone), but failed to raise enough money to pay his debts. The settlement of his estate dragged on for four years. On October 24, 1856, Menaugh filed the final settlement papers. Reding's creditors each received 20 percent of their original claims, a total of \$95.54.

How was it that Thomas Reding owed over \$450 in debts? Only two years before his death his financial worth was listed as \$1,000 in the 1850 census. The little debts of \$2 and \$3 are understandable, but the larger sums of \$137.20, \$119.83, and \$86 are puzzling. Most of his creditors were farmers, although one was a merchant and another a teacher. Most were Salem or Washington County residents, and several, like Reding, were natives of North Carolina. Perhaps Reding borrowed

money over a period of time, or perhaps he accepted services without paying for them. Reding might have naturally turned to his father-in-law when faced with financial difficulties. Attkisson could easily have felt a family obligation to help but still have wanted his money back when Reding died.

Thomas Reding's own tombstone (Fig. 39) stands in Crown Hill Cemetery, next to the sandstone markers of his two children who had died so long before. The marble stone, probably carved by Haney, is decorated with a triangular symbol like the one on the Milton Morrison stone (Fig. 31). The marker bears a long epitaph, but because the marble is badly damaged, the inscription is legible only in certain lighting conditions. We have never managed to decipher it completely, but can see that it refers to Thomas's great piety. One more stone stands in the Reding plot, a small sandstone slab (probably carved by Haney) for the Reding's youngest child, Harriet, who died on February 6, 1854, at the age of five. The carver seems to have tried to make her stone resemble the ones for Reding's other children.

Celia Reding was remarried on December 2, 1856, to Hugh Rodman, a wealthy farmer of sixty-eight. He apparently did not live long after his marriage, for Celia is listed in the 1860 census as the boarder of William A. Morrison, a saddler. She had retaken her first married name, Reding, and listed her occupation as milliner. Living with her were two of her children—Joseph, twenty-one, and Caroline, sixteen. Joseph was a painter. We are curious as to whether he was an artist, like his father, or a house painter. The Redings' daughter, Jemimah, married Lionel Rumrill on November 18, 1856, just a few weeks before her mother's second marriage. Rumrill was a newspaper editor, and the couple left the area soon after their marriage. We find no references to Reding's family after the 1860 census.

As we have already noted, James Haney took over the gravestone carving business in Salem. He was extremely pro-



Fig. 39. Thomas R. Reding stone, Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem, Washington County, attributed to James Haney

lific, and we find stones signed by him well into the 1870s. By the mid-1860s, Haney ran a regular advertisement in the *Washington Democrat* and owned a shop on the northeast corner of the square in Salem. Except for the earliest years of

his career, he worked with marble. His stones often feature the flowery, sentimental Victorian illustrations that were so popular during the period. Haney's stones stand alongside Reding's in many Washington County cemeteries.

Thomas R. Reding was the last truly original gravestone carver in his area. He represented a link with the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England carvers, with his interest in their old motifs, as well as his consistent use of durable, native sandstone. With Reding's death, this link with the origins of the craft in this country was broken.

Reding produced stones of exceptional quality from the start of his career in around 1840 until his death in 1852. He constantly sought change, employing an astonishing variety of lettering and illustrative styles. His vivid imagination never stagnated; the stones are alive with vigor and emotion. He embraced gravestone carving with a creativity and enthusiasm that carries him beyond the simple term craftsman. Thomas R. Reding was an artist, always striving to express his most profound feelings about the mysteries of life and death.

IV

FINDING THOMAS REDING

OUR INTEREST IN THOMAS REDING WAS SPARKED BY W. Douglas Hartley's *The Search for Henry Cross*, the story of a nineteenth-century Brown County gravestone carver. We visited the various cemeteries where Cross's stones appear in the fall of 1980. As our fascination with old tombstones and their carvers increased, we began looking for other old stones in south central Indiana. Our travels eventually led us to the Jackson County area, and it was there that we first discovered Thomas Reding.

The Dodds stone in Guthrie Cemetery just inside Lawrence County was the first stone we discovered. We were immediately intrigued by this artistic and delicate depiction of a lamb. Our next discovery was Smallwood Cemetery in Jackson County, where we found our first signed stone, that of Dorcas Goss. The unique nature of Reding's work and the light colored sandstone he used enabled us to quickly make a tentative connection between the two cemeteries. By this time we had seen so many lackluster gravestones that we knew we had made a special discovery.

Our next major find was Driftwood Cemetery, also in Jackson County. There, the James Thompson stone signed "T. R. Reding & Voris, Salem, Ia," told us where Reding lived. Upon seeing the vast number of Reding stones in Salem's Crown Hill Cemetery, we began our research in earnest. With the aid of U. S. Geological Survey maps, we looked for every cemetery in Washington and Jackson counties, carefully establishing the limits of Reding's territory.

Certain discoveries stand out strongly in our minds. We found Walnut Ridge Cemetery on a balmy spring day in 1981. We actually didn't notice the sarcophagus until, having explored the entire yard, we were leaning on it, discussing our finds. Only then did we see Reding's initials carved on the lid of the tomb. Canton Cemetery is memorable for another reason. We were there on a damp, chilly, cloudy day in early March, and it was in this cemetery that we found our first marble Reding stone. We were aghast at this find and pictured in our minds a depressingly huge number of illegible marble stones, all, maybe or maybe not, carved by Reding. While more confusing than his sandstone markers, Reding's marble stones have proved identifiable through familiarity with his other works.

Martinsburg Cemetery in southeastern Washington County was at first puzzling to us. We found several very recent marble markers scattered about in the old section of the cemetery. In the midst of these stood one fine unillustrated Reding stone. Several moments passed before we saw the inscription on one of the marble stones, stating it had been erected to replace the original marker, which was destroyed by a tornado in April of 1973. All of these replacement stones were for people who died during the 1840s and 1850s; many of them might have been carved by Reding.

We discovered Franklin Cemetery on a warm but rainy spring day and were frustrated by our attempts to photograph the stones between rain showers. Mill Creek Cemetery was a perplexing discovery, with signed stones by Voris, Reding and Briggs, and Briggs and Snepp. We first visited this cemetery just before dusk on a cold, late winter day, and stood there, a brisk northerly wind sweeping across the hilltop, wondering if we were in over our heads. The marble stone in Epsom Cemetery signed "Reding and Smith" was just as confusing. Fortunately, this is the only stone we have found with this signature.

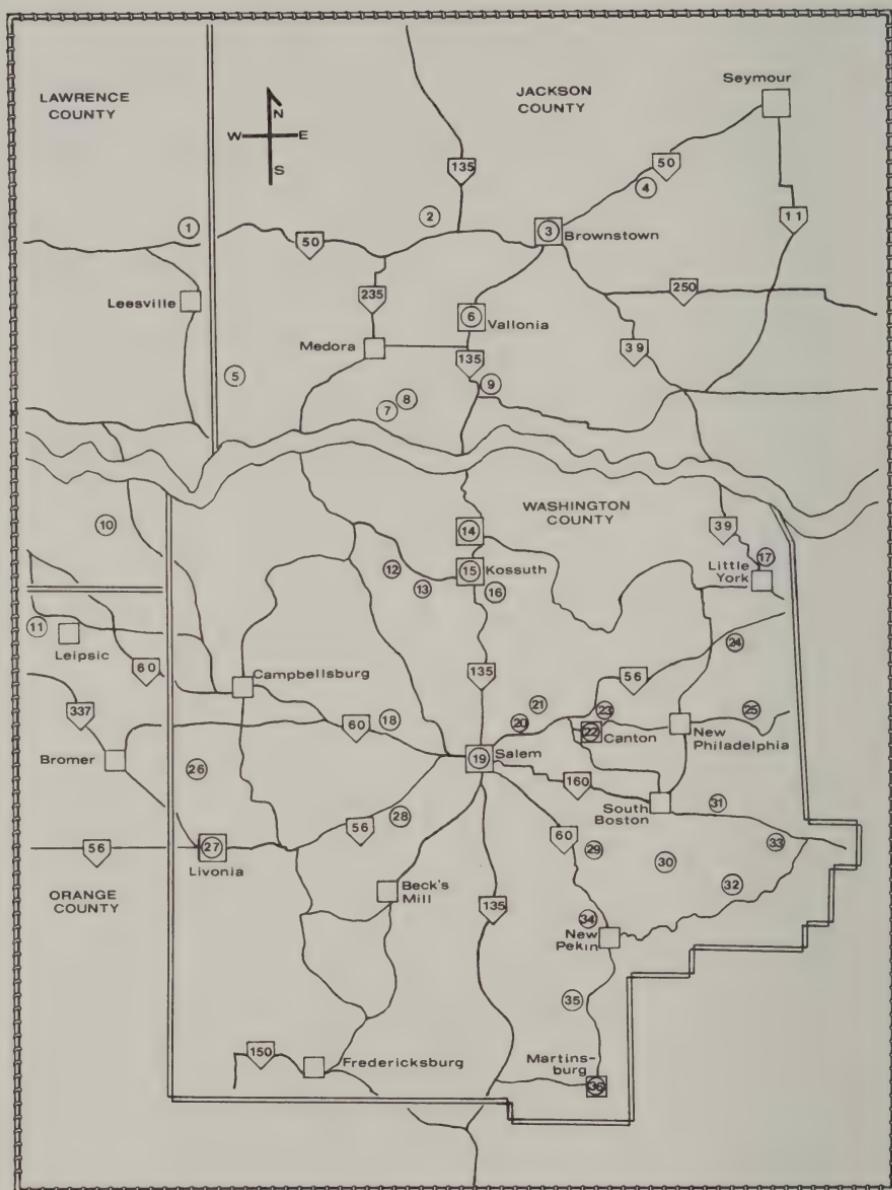
We must admit we found James Reding and his sons' stones completely by luck. These stones lie in Orange County, well outside of Reding's territory. We discovered them on a leisurely fall drive through the Orange County countryside. The unexpected nature of this find made it one of our most exciting. It also makes clear the fact that there may be other Reding stones outside his territory; these we may never find. Also, topographical conditions have sometimes made it impossible to locate a cemetery, so there are some graveyards we have not yet seen.

Our travels have not lacked excitement. We are frequently barked at and chased by threatening dogs who are unappreciative of our presence. On one occasion a family welcomed us to visit an old cemetery on their farmland. They warned us, however, to "yell real loud" if we ran into the wild bull that was roaming on their property. We have been hopelessly mired in a remote, country road and soaked by chilly winter rains as well as warmer spring showers. Much of our traveling took place in the spring of 1981, when heavy rains flooded the Muscatatuck and White rivers. We were often turned back by washed-out roads and bridges, especially in Jackson County. Fortunately, our geological survey maps made it almost impossible to get lost.

The search for written records concerning Thomas Reding always proved equally exciting. We feel lucky that Reding was such a litigious man; his frequent involvement in legal action provides clues about his life and personality. The census has also proved very informative as well as the administrator's notice and sale notice in the *Washington Democrat*. On a less fortunate note, the papers filed in Reding's estate settlement have apparently vanished. We do have the Probate Court Record Books that summarized the case, but the actual papers would have been very enlightening, especially since the estate took so long to settle. We also regret that the records of the Methodist Episcopal Church no longer exist. These papers

usually contained tributes to prominent members of the congregation, and as Thomas was probably still a trustee at the time of his death, the records would have undoubtedly provided valuable information about his life. (Warder Stevens reports in his history of Washington County that Alexander Attkisson kept the minutes of the trustees' meetings of the Methodist Episcopal Church during Reding's period).

Finally, we should mention the residents of Jackson and Washington counties who were usually very nice to us. We appreciate all the people who let us explore the cemeteries on their property and provided us with local information. We would be very grateful to anybody in the area with knowledge of Reding, old stones, or remote cemeteries if they would contact us.



MAP KEY

1. Guthrie Cemetery
2. Smallwood Cemetery
3. Old Brownstown Cemetery
4. Durland Cemetery
5. Brown Cemetery
6. Vallonia Cemetery
7. Epsom Cemetery
8. Harrell Cemetery
9. Driftwood Cemetery
10. Talbott Cemetery
11. Liberty Cemetery
12. Covenanter Cemetery
13. Walnut Ridge Cemetery
14. Plattsburg Cemetery
15. Kossuth Cemetery
16. Peugh Cemetery
17. Little York Cemetery
18. Mount Zion Cemetery
19. Crown Hill Cemetery
20. Blue River (South) Cemetery
21. Blue River (North) Cemetery
22. Canton Cemetery
23. Franklin Cemetery
24. Mount Cemetery
25. Beech Grove Cemetery
26. Lost River Cemetery
27. Livonia Cemetery
28. Mill Creek Cemetery
29. Old Hebron Cemetery
30. Olive Branch Cemetery
31. Conway Cemetery
32. Mead Cemetery
33. Bunker Hill Cemetery
34. Mount Pleasant Cemetery
35. Mount Washington Cemetery
36. Martinsburg Cemetery

DIRECTIONS TO THE CEMETERIES

WE HAVE PROVIDED A MAP FOR GENERAL REFERENCE purposes and to give readers an idea of Reding's territory. We strongly recommend that anyone wishing to visit the cemeteries take a road atlas of the area. Fortunately, a number of state roads and highways crisscross the Jackson County-Washington County area, and we have tried to keep travelers on these main roads whenever possible. Nearly all of the cemeteries are hard to reach, so we have also added short descriptions of the cemeteries and noted which ones are especially worth the trip. Several cemeteries containing stones carved by Reding are on private property, and we have therefore left them off this list. We have divided the cemeteries according to their proximity to one another so that the reader can visit them in groups. We have established Brownstown as the center of the Jackson County area and Salem as the center of the Washington County area.

JACKSON COUNTY

Brownstown Cemetery

Traveling east on U. S. Highway 50, take this road into town. Continue on 50 as it turns left towards the center of town. Turn right immediately after passing the courthouse.

This cemetery contains several stones from the mid-1800s, but only one stone by Thomas Reding, the Lucinda Durham marker (Fig. 8).

Durland Cemetery

Continue west out of Brownstown on U. S. Highway 50 for about $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles. The cemetery is on a steep hill on the right side of the road.

The cemetery contains only a fragment of a signed marble stone and is noteworthy as the northeastern limit of Reding's territory.

Vallonia Cemetery

Indiana State Road 135 intersects U. S. Highway 50 at the western edge of Brownstown. Follow S. R. 135 south for 3.2 miles. The cemetery is on the southern edge of town at the intersection of S. R. 135 and the town's main street. The large cemetery is on the left and is very hard to miss.

The oldest stones are towards the back of the yard. About half a dozen Reding stones are here, most of them for members of the Durham family.

Driftwood Cemetery

Follow Indiana S. R. 135 south from Vallonia for about $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles. The cemetery is on the left, and a beautiful old white wooden church stands across the road.

This cemetery is well worth a visit. Several early Reding stones are here, as well as the James Thompson marker carved by Reding and Voris, and a marble collaboration of Reding and Briggs.

Harrell Cemetery

Go south on Indiana S. R. 135 from Driftwood a little over half a mile. Turn right at the intersection, travel 2 miles and turn left. The cemetery sits at an intersection 1 mile south, on the left side of the road.

The Lucy Ann Harrell stone (Fig. 3) stands here, along

with several marble stones possibly carved by Reding. Two early sandstone markers here may be the work of Voris.

Epsom Cemetery

This cemetery lies a few yards south of Harrell on the other side of the road.

Both sandstone and marble stones can be found here, including the singular collaboration of Reding and Smith.

Smallwood Cemetery

Indiana S. R. 135 North is $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles west of S. R. 135 South on U. S. Highway 50. Take S. R. 135 north for $1\frac{1}{3}$ miles to the first intersection. Turn left and travel for about half a mile. The cemetery, impossible to miss, is on a hill on the left.

The three stones for the Goss family (including Figs. 7 and 37) are the only Reding stones in this yard.

Guthrie Creek Cemetery (Lawrence County)

This cemetery is about 5 miles west of Brownstown on U. S. Highway 50. Traveling west, the turnoff is the first right after crossing from Jackson to Lawrence County, about .4 mile into Lawrence County.

The Jonathan Dodds stone (Fig. 21) is the only Reding stone here.

Brown Cemetery

From U. S. Highway 50, turn left at the same intersection where you turned right to go to Guthrie Creek Cemetery. Continue south to Leesville, about 2 miles from the intersection. Immediately south of town the road forks off. Bear right and continue for .1 mile. The road forks again here—this time, go left. Continue down the winding country road for a little over 3 miles. Turn right at the first major intersection.

The cemetery is about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile down the road on the left.

The Reding stones here are the James and Mary Brown stones (Fig. 13) and are located in the back of the small cemetery.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Crown Hill Cemetery, Salem

Take Indiana S. R. 60 into town. Crown Hill Cemetery is west of the center of town, south of S. R. 60 at the end of Shelby Street.

This is a huge cemetery, with the old stones located in the northeast corner. This is the largest concentration of Reding stones anywhere. Aside from the many stones mentioned in the text, also look for the Mary Young, William Augustus Rowland, Rachel Thornburgh, and Esther Stockwell markers. Also note the many stones for the victims of the 1833 cholera plague that we have tentatively attributed to Voris. There are also several fine illustrated stones from the late 1820s and early 1830s that we feel may have been carved by Voris. Reding's own tombstone, of course, is here as well.

Peugh Cemetery

Indiana State Roads 60 and 135 intersect in the center of Salem. Travel north on S. R. 135 for 5.9 miles. Turn right onto a gravel road. A wooden sign for Seldom Seen Lake stands near the turnoff. The cemetery is straight ahead, through an intersection, on the right.

There is a pyramidal shaped sandstone monument in this cemetery, much like the ones Reding carved as part of the illustration on so many of his tombstones. We are not sure, though, if this is the work of Reding or his pupil, James Haney.

Kossuth Cemetery

Continue north on S. R. 135 for another mile. Kossuth is located on a bend in the road, and there are two turnoffs into the town, which is very small. Take the second left turn and the cemetery is on the left.

This cemetery contains three very fine unillustrated sandstone Reding markers. We should perhaps mention that every time we have visited this cemetery, there have been two hostile dogs only a few yards down the road. Our examinations of this cemetery have been necessarily brief.

Walnut Ridge Cemetery

Travel west on the same road that Kossuth Cemetery is on (locally known as Walnut Ridge Road) for about 1½ miles. The cemetery is right next to the road on the left.

This cemetery contains the largest number of Reding stones outside of Crown Hill Cemetery, and some of his most magnificent as well. Several of these have been discussed in the text; also look for the John and Martha Mark, Jonas Myers, and Mary Ann Deny stones. There is a fine marble marker for a woman whose first name is Lavinia (her last name is illegible). Two obelisks for William Potts and John Bogle here may have been carved by Reding.

Covenanter Cemetery

Continue west on Walnut Ridge Road for about 1¼ miles. Turn at the first left, onto a dirt road. The cemetery is at the end of the mile-long road. At our last visit, the final section of this road was badly eroded and we had to walk part way.

The Robert Lusk stone (Fig. 11) is here, as well as a fine marker for William Faris, and a stone signed by Briggs and Snep.

Plattsburg Cemetery

Return to Kossuth and take S. R. 135 for another 1.1 miles north. The left turn into Plattsburg is just in front of three silos. The cemetery is about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile down this road, on the left, behind a house. If you miss the first turn into Plattsburg, there is a second one about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile farther north on S. R. 135. This is a gravel road that leads straight to the cemetery.

There are several fine Reding stones here, including a signed marker for Benjamin Pidgeon.

Mount Zion Cemetery

Indiana State Roads 60 and 56 intersect west of Salem. Going west, travel $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from this intersection on S. R. 60. Turn right and continue north for a bit more than $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. Turn left onto a dirt road just before reaching the old church. The cemetery is at the top of a hill.

The Robert Meeks stone (Fig. 34) is here, as well as several unillustrated sandstone markers that could possibly be Haney's.

Talbott Cemetery (Lawrence County)

Traveling east on S. R. 60 towards Salem, cross from Lawrence County into Orange County. The turnoff is on the left a little more than $\frac{3}{4}$ mile into Orange County. Travel north a bit over 2 miles, turn right, go $\frac{1}{2}$ mile and turn left. After another $\frac{1}{2}$ mile the road turns right; follow this road until the church and the cemetery appear on the right.

This cemetery is filled with sandstone markers. Many are different than Reding stones and the stones we attribute to Voris and could well be the work of another Orange County carver. Two stones, however, for Levi Fordyec and Felix Rawlings, appear to be early collaborations between Voris and Reding.

Liberty Cemetery (Orange County)

Follow S. R. 60 east from Mitchell and turn right 1 mile past the entrance to Spring Mill State Park. The road forks $\frac{1}{3}$ mile from the turnoff. Take the right fork and proceed another 3 miles. The church and large cemetery are on the right.

The marble stone for James Reding (Fig. 32) is in this cemetery, as well as the small sandstone markers for his two sons. There are many other sandstone markers here. Some are probably the work of Voris, others are signed by an Orange County carver named Prosser.

Mill Creek Cemetery

This cemetery is $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles west of the State Roads 56 and 60 intersection on S. R. 56. Traveling west, it lies on the left, on a steep hillside. A white wooden sign marks the cemetery, which is partially obscured by trees.

This cemetery is definitely worth a visit. The Reding and Briggs stone for Samuel Lee (Fig. 27) and the only signed Voris stone (Fig. 1) are both here. A stone signed by Briggs and Snepp lies towards the back of the yard. Several fine unillustrated Reding stones are here as well.

Livonia Cemetery

This town is a little more than $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of Mill Creek Cemetery on S. R. 56. The cemetery is on the western edge of town and is marked, on the left side of the road, by a green road sign. The cemetery is back from the road a bit.

The oldest stones are in the front of the cemetery. The Rev. W. W. Martin and Elizabeth Potter stones (Figs. 36 and 30) are probably the only Reding stones here. There are some stones here that may have been carved by Voris.

Lost River Cemetery

Continue west about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile past Livonia Cemetery on S. R. 56 to S. R. 337. Turn right, go almost $\frac{1}{2}$ mile and turn right again. This turn is not a right angle turn. Travel on this road for almost $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles and turn right. Stay on this road, which twists and turns a bit, for about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles. Lost River Church is on the left.

There are actually two buildings here, an old wooden church and a newer brick building. The cemetery is behind the buildings. There are only two Reding stones here, partially buried in the ground off to the left of the main cemetery.

The Blue River Cemeteries

Take S. R. 56 east from its intersection with S. R. 135 in Salem, and travel for $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles. Turn left here. A small, white hand-painted sign on the right indicates the turnoff. The first Blue River Church and cemetery are up the road $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. There are several Reding stones here, including an illustrated marker for William Hitchcock. The second Blue River church is about 1 mile north of the first. This church is a beautiful old white frame building with a fine bell tower. Several small unillustrated Reding stones stand in the cemetery.

Canion Cemetery

Go east on S. R. 56 for 2 miles from the turnoff to the Blue River churches. There is a road sign marking the turnoff to Canion. Turn right here, then take the second right into town. Turn left at the old general store that is now called the Doll Hospital. The cemetery is down a dirt road.

The stones for Elma Moore and her triplets (page 24) are here. There are two marble Reding stones, as well as many fragments of sandstone markers.

Franklin Cemetery

The road to this cemetery is about 1½ miles east of the turnoff to Canton on S. R. 56. Turn right near a yellow house trailer, then turn left at the stop sign. Follow the road around to the church and cemetery.

The Elizabeth Slaed and Elenor Gibbens stones (Figs. 28 and 16) are the only illustrated Reding stones here. There are at least sixteen other Reding sandstone markers here, several of which have beautifully engraved sun symbols.

Mount Cemetery

Travel east on S. R. 56 from the turnoff to Franklin Cemetery for 6.7 miles. Turn right onto a gravel road that winds through the trees. The cemetery is on the right.

The stones for Mathias and Ann Mount stand near the back of the cemetery. They are illustrated with willows, much like the one on the Gibbens stone (Fig. 16).

Little York Cemetery

Continue east on S. R. 56 for 1½ miles from the Mount Cemetery turnoff. Turn left onto S. R. 39 and travel 2.1 miles. Take the sharp right turn. The cemetery is divided in half by the road; the Reding stone is in the left section.

The one fine Reding stone here is illustrated with a willow, tomb, and lamb design.

Old Hebron Cemetery

State Road 160 comes off the east side of the Salem square. Take 160 east about 4.8 miles. Watch the road signs carefully, for the road winds around a good deal, with many smaller roads branching off of it. Take the first right after crossing some railroad tracks. The cemetery is down the road about 2 miles, on the left on a steep hillside.

The Mary Ann Spurgin stone (Fig. 26) stands here, along with several unillustrated sandstone markers. The Spurgin stone is the largest Reding marker carved from a single piece of stone.

Mount Pleasant Cemetery

From Old Hebron, follow the road south for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. Turn left where the road ends and turn right at a modern brick church. Travel on this road until it ends, a little over a mile. Turn right and continue west until you meet up with S. R. 60. Travel south a little more than 3 miles on S. R. 60 towards New Pekin. Take the first right in New Pekin, continue for about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile until the road forks. Take the left fork. The cemetery is about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile down this road, on the right at the first intersection.

The Mary Ann Charles and Anna Atkinson stones (Figs. 6 and 18) are in this cemetery. Also here are two fine unillustrated sandstone markers signed by Reding and Voris, as well as at least two marble stones carved by Reding. Although somewhat difficult to get to, this cemetery is well worth the trip.

Mount Washington Cemetery

Go south at the intersection by Mount Pleasant Cemetery for a little over $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, until you reach Mount Washington Church. The cemetery is on both sides of the road. The Reding stones are on the left side, leaning on a tree.

Martinsburg Cemetery

Continue on the same road for about $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles until you reach Martinsburg. The large cemetery is on the left and is quite visible from the road.

The only Reding stone here is a beautiful unillustrated marker for Elizabeth Coverton. A tornado hit this cemetery in

1973, destroying many old stones. They have been replaced by modern marble stones. We have no way of knowing how many of these missing stones were carved by Reding.

Olive Branch Cemetery

Take S. R. 160 east from Salem for $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The small town of South Boston stands at an intersection—turn right here. Travel about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles on this road, turn right again, and go about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.

There is one sandstone marker here and the remains of a destroyed stone.

Conway Cemetery

Travel east on S. R. 160 from South Boston for another $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles. Conway Church will be on the left side of the road.

Three sandstone markers stand in this graveyard, including the post-dated Stacy Cogswell stone.

Beech Grove Cemetery

Continue east on S. R. 160 for another $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles past Conway Cemetery. Turn left onto New Salem Road (the road is marked). Go straight on this road for almost 3 miles and turn left. Follow this road, which curves to the right and leads up to the church.

The Elizabeth Boyce stone (Fig. 29) is in this cemetery, as well as another sandstone marker and several marble stones that may have been carved by Reding.

Bunker Hill Cemetery

Take S. R. 160 east from the New Salem Road turnoff for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. The cemetery lies on both sides of the road, with the older stones on the right hand section beside the white church.

There is one broken signed sandstone marker in this cemetery.

Mead Cemetery

Continue east from Bunker Hill for $\frac{1}{4}$ mile on S. R. 160 and turn right at the intersection. The cemetery is $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles south on this winding road, on the right in a lovely stand of pines.

The Reding stone here is a signed, unillustrated marble slab, post-dated by at least twenty years.

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